CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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28 June 2001

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 28 June 2001, at 10.10 a.m.

President Mr. Carlos Amat Fores (Cuba)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish) I declare open the 879th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament

Distinguished delegates, we have learned with deep sorrow about a tragic earthquake that struck Peru earlier this week, taking a heavy toll in lives and material damage I am sure that you all join me in extending our sympathy and condolences to the survivors and to the Government and people of Peru on this sad occasion

As you are aware, Ambassador Anne Anderson of Ireland will soon be relinquishing her post as representative of her country to the Conference During the time that she has spent here, since July 1995, she has presented the position of her Government with great skill and elegance, and also, I might say, in the unaffected manner so characteristic of her Her personal contribution to our collective efforts and, in particular, her sensitivity to the aspirations of the non-member States applying for membership of the Conference have been valued by all and have contributed substantially to two successive expansions of the membership of the Conference She had the honour to be her country's first representative to the Conference on Disarmament when, in 1999, Ireland was admitted as a full member On behalf of us all, I would like to convey to Ambassador Anderson our very best wishes for her continued success and personal happiness

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Ireland and Algeria

Before giving them the floor, however, I would like to make an opening statement on Cuba's assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament

Before looking in detail at how we see our work proceeding during this presidency, allow me to make a few general comments

First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the efforts made by all the distinguished ambassadors who have preceded me in this important post None of them has spared time or energy in their endeavour to reach an agreement on the Conference's programme of work If the necessary consensus eluded them, this was clearly due to such factors as the current political, strategic and international security situation, which has direct repercussions on this sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, and responsibility therefor can in no way be laid at the door of those who have led us and guided us in our work If the consensus in the Conference on Disarmament were directly proportional to the efforts and dedication manifested by its presidents, at this juncture we would most definitely be negotiating general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control

As we assume our presidency, I would like to assure you that we are fully aware of the high honour and the responsibility which this office entails We too shall spare no effort in endeavouring to steer this vessel safely to harbour If in the end this goal eludes us, you shall not hear me state that, while victory has many fathers, defeat is an orphan In both cases, responsibility is entirely collective

(The President)

Let us recall that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament and arms control and that, as such, great hopes have been vested in it by the international community. The Conference on Disarmament has negotiated important legally binding international instruments that constitute major landmarks in the history of disarmament and non-proliferation.

I am fully aware, however, that today, as never before, the Conference on Disarmament faces great difficulties in achieving the purposes for which it was set up without further setbacks. The prevailing international situation in the field of disarmament and arms control, and the growing trends towards hegemonic unilateralism displayed by the world's super-Power are directly reflected in this forum and in the stalemate in which it finds itself.

At the same time, I am one of those who believe that, if the Conference on Disarmament did not exist, we would be working to create it. The Conference is a forum of incontestable validity and relevance, in which a valuable store of experience and knowledge relating to the cause of disarmament is being accumulated and must not be wasted.

If we are to consolidate the substantial benefits to international peace and security which would result from progress in disarmament and arms control, we must be able to count on the political will of all, manifested with the utmost sincerity and a determination to comply scrupulously with the imperatives placed upon us by the international community.

Moving on now to more specific considerations relating to our work in the presidency, I would like to make the following points.

I intend my work as President to continue the work carried out by my predecessor, our friend Ambassador Camilo Reyes. When he concluded his term of office, Ambassador Reyes left the way open for us to confirm our interest in revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament. We will work to achieve progress both in developing the work of the three special coordinators that we have appointed and in the substantive issues outlined in the Amorim proposal, as contained in document CD/1624.

I plan to conduct intensive consultations on the programme of work on the basis of this proposal, which, as I understand it, all member delegations of the Conference wish to retain as the basis for reaching agreement on the programme of work.

I also intend to conduct bilateral consultations with as many delegations as possible and naturally we are open to any suggestions, proposals or ideas which could be useful in our task of reaching consensus on the programme of work. Key importance clearly attaches to exchanges with the coordinators of the three regional groups and China, since they represent the positions and viewpoints of their respective groups.

We, likewise, shall maintain close coordination with all of you and I trust that I can count on your collaboration and support.

(The President)

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate my appreciation to the distinguished ambassadors who have preceded me in this post, and most especially Ambassador Camilo Reyes, my immediate predecessor, for their advice and suggestions, always so useful and timely.

To Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference, to Mr. Enrique Roman-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General, and to the entire staff of the secretariat and the interpreters, I express our trust that we can continue to count on your valuable cooperation.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland, Ambassador Anne Anderson.

Ms. ANDERSON (Ireland): Mr. President, I thank you for your very kind and very personal words, which I appreciate greatly. I convey my congratulations on your assumption of office and assure you of my delegation's support throughout your presidency.

Some time ago a departing colleague suggested a rule of thumb which allowed a farewell statement proportionate to the length of stay of the ambassador - a page for every year. I feel it is my duty to inform you at the outset that I have served in Geneva for six years, and I hope that that news will not be greeted with too much dismay!

For the first four years of my assignment, I was present in this room as an observer. For the past two years, as you pointed out earlier, Ireland has had the privilege of membership.

I was very honoured that we became a member of the Conference on Disarmament during my time as ambassador. With Ireland's history in the disarmament area, I felt deeply that we belonged in this forum and had something useful to contribute here.

A minor irony of history is that, 40 years ago, Ireland was approached to accept a nomination to one of the five Western seats in the then newly formed Disarmament Committee, which had a total membership of 18. It seems that we turned down the offer at the time because of staff shortages in our diplomatic service! An application for admission to this successor body, the Conference on Disarmament, was submitted in 1982 and we were finally admitted in 1999 after a 17-year wait.

On the day of our admission, I said that our sustained effort to secure membership was an act of faith in the future of the Conference on Disarmament. Despite being sorely tested, that faith remains. I believe that this body can and will recover its sense of purpose.

In looking at how and why we have lost that sense of purpose, the starting point is our mandate. Perhaps the most hallowed phrase in this room is that the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the disarmament area. That phrase conveys a fine sense of our vocation and we use it repeatedly to urge ourselves to action.

But each of the elements bears further examination. "Sole" - true of course that we are the only standing forum but we are all increasingly aware of the unfavourable comparisons with

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successful examples of ad hoc negotiation. "Negotiating forum" - critical indeed to maintain that focus so that the Conference does not become a talking shop. But in the real world, the distinctions are not always watertight: purposeful discussion can lead to pre-negotiation which can lead to negotiation. In focusing our vision, it is important that we take care not to narrow it unduly.

It is on the term "multilateral" that I would particularly like to pause, however. Over the past few years, to explain and excuse the long paralysis, we have reached for the explanation that the Conference on Disarmament can only act when the overall security climate is conducive - in effect that, though a multilateral forum, we are hostage to key bilateral relationships.

Realism of course dictates that what happens in the Conference on Disarmament reflects developments on the outside. At the same time, it does not seem unduly ambitious to hope for some movement in the opposite direction - that progress or lack of it in the Conference might affect, even in a modest way, the perspectives of key players.

Regrettably, we have seen little of this in the past few years. Outside our circle here, there is scant evidence that the prolonged inactivity of this body is causing any real concern. The opportunity cost of a stalled Conference on Disarmament does not seem to weigh heavily in key capitals.

And yet even those who appear to feel they have least need of this body cannot be without concern. First, if I might adapt the phrase, diplomacy abhors a vacuum. If our proceedings are not making things better, they risk making things worse. In the absence of serious work here, national statements all too easily become vehicles by which differences are sharpened and deepened rather than attempting to find common ground on which differences might first co-exist and eventually be resolved. Second, the assumption that the Conference on Disarmament can be put into cold storage for long periods, and then taken out again for business as usual when there is a particular purpose to be served, could prove flawed. One cannot exclude that the atrophy which comes from prolonged disuse may do permanent damage.

We look to the Conference on Disarmament for the exercise of responsible multilateralism.

What is the essence of responsible multilateralism? It is a balance: on the one hand, a recognition of the space which key actors require for bilateral policy formulation; on the other hand, a responsiveness by those key players to broadly representative views of the international community.

It would be difficult to assert that we have got the balance right. Currently new strategic directions are being explored and new strategic bargains are being canvassed, while the Conference on Disarmament risks becoming an irrelevant sideshow.

One has the impression sometimes, at least in the security area, that multilateralism is regarded as the self-indulgence of small nations. In fact, it is critical in terms both of

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methodology and outcomes. It is the means of giving a voice to populations whose lives and futures are at stake in strategic decision-making. It creates a sense of ownership of the outcomes negotiated. And it is also, in our view, the best way to achieve one of the main goals of disarmament - the essential irreversibility of the process.

The ending of cold war rigidities might have been expected to usher in a period of vibrant and fluid multilateralism. So far this has not happened and we need to ask ourselves why.

Perhaps we misjudged the transition period required. The ending of the cold war is sometimes spoken of as if it occurred on a single date and by general acclaim. The reality of course is much more complex and there was bound to be a time lag before the multilateral disarmament machinery caught up. But sufficient time has now elapsed for us to have found our voice and our role.

Part of the problem may also lie in the fact that our structures have not adapted to the new environment. The end of the rigidities of the cold war begs the question why such rigidities should continue in bodies which were established to deal with the consequences of the cold war. I shall revert to that in a Conference on Disarmament context in a moment.

More generally, I want to assert our strong belief that the more fluid, less polar, circumstances in which security matters have come to be considered create opportunities for new coalitions of action, which are capable of attracting widespread, committed and effective support.

We see the New Agenda Coalition as one example of such an approach. In 1998, Ireland came together with six other countries to form this Coalition. With its diverse membership, the New Agenda Coalition owes its cohesion to the shared conviction of its members that, in current circumstances, there can be a seamless process of negotiation and agreement to the elimination of the ultimate weapons of mass destruction - nuclear weapons.

The New Agenda objective is an ambitious one - to try to give substance and reality to what was often expressed as a goal under the old rigidities but which had little prospect of agreement on a multilateral basis. The road down which we are travelling is not and was never going to be an easy one. But we believe that our participation as a group in the NPT Review Conference last year did help to strengthen the outcome, and in particular helped to secure the 13-step guide, which is a critical part of that outcome. We are working with out partners on continuing to define the future role for the Coalition.

The New Agenda Coalition is just one example. There can be many others. The basic point I want to make is that the legitimacy of multilateralism needs to be constantly reasserted, nowhere more so than in the disarmament area, and never more so than now, at a time of radical reassessment of the international security architecture.

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Coming to the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament, my delegation has made clear that we regard the Amorim proposals as a well balanced basis for agreement on a work programme.

From what I have said today, and from practically every statement that I have made during six years in this room, it will be obvious that, for Ireland, nuclear disarmament lies at the heart of the work of this Conference. We want to see the establishment of an appropriate subsidiary body at the earliest possible date.

We also, like so many others, wish to see the Conference on Disarmament begin immediately negotiation on a treaty dealing with fissile material on the basis of the Shannon mandate. For those who are serious about wanting to achieve nuclear disarmament, banning the production of weapon-usable fissile material is, like the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, an essential, not optional, step.

We also see merit in embarking on a process which will eventually lead to a legal agreement for the non-weaponization of outer space. We recognize there is much to be done in establishing a common understanding of terms but see work in this area as an opportunity for this body to address an issue which will grow in importance, and danger in the twenty-first century. Without a willingness to address the matter seriously in a negotiating forum, the possibility of the weaponization of outer space grows annually to the point where it too would have to become the subject of a non-proliferation effort.

Globalization may be an over-used and under-defined term but if ever there was an appropriate area for a global approach, it is surely in seeking to prevent outer space becoming humankind's next battlefield.

We were all aware of the sense of relief in the Conference last week when the three special coordinators were appointed. I congratulate all involved and in particular our former President, the distinguished Ambassador of Colombia, our friend, Camilo Reyes, for his efforts.

Nevertheless, I will not conceal the initial scepticism I expressed in our group discussions about having the Conference on Disarmament head off in this direction. My concern was that we might relieve the pressure for advances on substance by engaging in a flurry of action on procedural issues. As time went on, however, it became more difficult to maintain this argument. Since key players did not appear to feel themselves under any pressure to reach an accommodation on issues of substance, the choice effectively became between continuing a total and stultifying inactivity or engaging in the kind of work that has now been mandated.

The best outcome will be if the initiation of this work gives a sense of renewal to the Conference and becomes a prelude to, rather than a substitute for, substantive work. The worst outcome will be a sense that the Conference on Disarmament is now justifying its existence and that we can be a little more comfortable in leaving the substantive challenges on hold.

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Having said that, there is manifestly useful work to be done in relation to the structures and functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. There is need for radical updating to reflect new circumstances. Given the slightly theatrical feel to much of our proceedings, I will borrow a theatrical metaphor - the audience has changed, the script has changed and yet we retain the props, the stage directions and the admission policy of another era.

This body was formed in the era of iron-tight alliances. We believe that under its current structures it encourages thinking along these lines. This creates first frustration and then lethargy. We encourage the coordinators to think imaginatively as to how the mould might be broken.

I would make just a few specific comments on the series of interlinked issues to be considered by the three special coordinators. On enlargement, our position is unsurprising in the light of our own experience. I repeat what I said on the date of our admission: "Outside or inside the Conference on Disarmament, Ireland's conviction on the desirability of expansion remains unchanged."

Significant further expansion would have major implications for the effective functioning of the Conference, not least in further calling into question the relevance of our current grouping systems.

As well as perpetuating the rigidities of another era, the current system allows one or two members of a group to hide behind a coordinator who must simply record lack of agreement. The informal caucusing which has characterized, for example, the later stages of the negotiation toward the protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention has underlined the need for and benefit of fluidity in such a process. The mismatch of the group structure to the real world would become even more evident in the event of the launch of a work programme which contained all the currently proposed elements.

As a counterbalance to such a loosening of structure, the appointment of a President for a longer term than is currently permitted could provide continuity and enhance the prospects of achieving defined goals within a term of office.

On the agenda, I will be brief. The agenda needs to relate to current realities, have the possibility of a longer duration than one year, and be capable of regular review and amendment. Modernization of the agenda, desirable as it can be and difficult as it may be to agree on, would, however, be an empty exercise in the absence of a will to give it expression through work. And of course, one outcome of the current exercise, which we must avoid at all costs, would be to allow the agenda to become an annual bone of contention and one more reason why the Conference is unable to get down to work.

Another issue which requires attention is the need for a formalized mechanism for input from the non-governmental disarmament community. There would be a compelling argument even if this were a body which was pursuing a full and active work programme. In our current circumstances, it is both compelling and potentially liberating. Whether in relation to small

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arms, anti-personnel landmines or other weapons which impact heavily upon civilian populations, civil society has established the right not just to be heard but actively to participate in our deliberations, a right which is effectively denied at present.

Mr. President, I have dwelt a good deal on substance given the indulgence that is offered to a departing ambassador. But I also wanted to use this opportunity to express my warm and genuine appreciation to colleagues here. I have hugely enjoyed your comradeship and hospitality, I have learned a great deal from your experience and insights and eloquence, and I value greatly the friendships I have formed. Successive presidents have been extraordinary in their energy and commitment and all members of the secretariat - under the wise and benevolent leadership of Mr. Petrovsky, whom I thank - all members have shown themselves true professionals in the best sense of the term. I thank you all.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Ireland for her statement and for the kind words she has expressed to the Chair, and once more, reiterate our most sincere wishes for her success in her new post. As you will not be all that far away, we hope to be able to see you often here in Geneva. We wish you every success in your personal life and your work.

I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria, Ms. Nassima Baghli.

Ms. BAGHLI (Algeria) (translated from French): Thank you, Mr. President, especially since I am taking the floor after the distinguished Ambassador of Ireland, whose skills and expertise are so acclaimed.

Mr. President, the Algerian delegation would like, first of all, to congratulate you on your accession to the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. It is convinced that, under your wise leadership, the Conference will be able in an effective manner to accomplish its proper mission, in accordance with the mandate conferred upon it.

The Algerian delegation would also like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation for the efforts made by your predecessor, Mr. Camilo Reyes of Colombia, with a view to restarting our work and bringing the Conference out of the impasse in which it has been held. His earnest application and dedication to his task have borne fruit, since we have just adopted a proposal put forward by him which, we hope, will breathe new life into the Conference on Disarmament.

I would also like to express our fullest appreciation for the work accomplished by the ambassadors who have held the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament since the beginning of the 2001 session, namely, Ambassador Christopher Westdal of Canada, Ambassador Juan Enrique Vega of Chile and Ambassador Hu Xiaodi of China. All three spared no efforts in their endeavours to move the work of the Conference forward and, for that, they deserve our full recognition and appreciation.

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Allow me also to express appreciation to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, whose advice and recommendations have given us valuable assistance and also to express our warm welcome to Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, who has joined us as Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference.

As I remarked earlier, the Conference has just adopted, on the initiative of the Colombian Ambassador, a decision to appoint three special coordinators on the issues of the review of its agenda, the expansion of its membership and its improved and effective functioning.

This proposal, which was supported by all the delegations represented here, should enable us to restart our work and to consider issues of great importance for the future of this body.

These three points in fact directly touch on the very structures of the Conference, on its effectiveness and its ability to find ways of ensuring its improved operation and thereby to tackle more effectively the international security issues which we face.

With regard to the issue of expansion, we in the Algerian delegation have, on several previous occasions, reiterated our wish that the Conference should be open to every State which expresses the will to be a full member. By this, we can only gain, both in terms of representativeness and legitimacy.

At the same time, and together with many other delegations, we believe that the Conference on Disarmament should be open to non-governmental organizations, particularly at the current time when civil society is becoming increasingly involved in the affairs of the world. This body should not try and swim against the tide, at the risk of being perceived as a last bastion, resistant to all efforts to render it more transparent. The Conference would certainly gain enormously by taking on board the points of view and opinions of non-governmental organizations.

We should express our thanks to Ambassador Günther Seibert of Germany, Ambassador Petko Draganov of Bulgaria and Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, who have taken on the task of coordinating the three committees. The Algerian delegation would like to assure them that they can count on its immediate and total support in their work. They face a daunting task, since their purpose will be to ensure that the Conference finds ways and means of more effectively discharging its mandate and, thereby, responding more fully to international realities which are in a constant state of flux.

These tasks, important though they might be, should not, however, obscure from us the substantive issues on the Conference's agenda.

As it enters the third millennium, humankind has embarked on a new era of its history. The aspirations of peoples for peace, for security and for well-being have never been so strong. The century which has just begun brings with it great hopes. Extraordinary progress has been

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made by humankind over the last few years. This progress must be consolidated and made accessible to the entire planet. For this, it is more than ever essential that a climate of international security be ushered in.

As the sole international multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament is the melting pot in which all views and initiatives undertaken to develop strategies to foster a safe international environment must come together. It should be fully aware of the responsibilities which have been conferred upon it and should endeavour, without delay, to embark on its programme of work.

A working basis is already in place for this. This is the Amorim proposal contained in document CD/1624, which, in the view of all, constitutes a basis for future intensive consultations. This proposal arose consequent to a series of proposals submitted, among others, by Venezuela and Algeria, with a view to bringing the Conference out of its current state of inertia and developing a programme of work.

We know that the Amorim proposal represents an acceptable minimum to some and a maximum to others, but it is important now that each of us demonstrates good will and flexibility to enable the Conference to start negotiations without any further delay. These negotiations should, as a matter of priority, bear on nuclear disarmament with a view to establishing a phased programme for the eventual destruction and total elimination of nuclear weapons.

It should be recalled that, pursuant to the outcome of the Sixth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the nuclear Powers have committed themselves, unequivocally, to the path of nuclear disarmament and of general and even complete disarmament.

Regrettably, we are forced to observe that, to date, the enthusiasm and promises that characterized that memorable meeting have not been followed by any action and that no progress has been made in this area. We strongly deplore the fact that no ad hoc committee with a clear mandate to negotiate on nuclear disarmament has yet been established.

We should recall, furthermore, that the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of July 1996, stressed that States had an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the extension of the nuclear-weapon-free zones and the universalization of the NPT are further measures which could help in attaining this goal.

We must act today to ensure that States possessing nuclear weapons honour their commitments and give a sign of good will by showing their readiness for dialogue. In this context, the breaking off of the dialogue which could have marked the completion of the START process and of the ABM treaties sends a disturbing signal.

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My delegation has already had the occasion to quote, here in this forum, the work written jointly by the Nobel prize-winners for physics, the Frenchman, Georges Charpak and the American, Richard Garwin, entitled Will-o'-the-Wisps and Nuclear Mushrooms, in which they show how nuclear arsenals can be reduced at minimum cost and deterrence levels maintained, taking due account of the security imperatives of the nuclear-weapon States. They also explain that the Russian and American negotiators aim to retain in 2003 15,000 strategic war heads, when fewer than 100 would be sufficient to maintain their deterrent capability.

This brings us to reflect on the whole issue of nuclear deterrence and to wonder what place there now is for nuclear weapons, after the end of the cold war, and, consequently what grounds there are for the current military doctrines and what shape they are assuming, and also to question the place of those doctrines which helped prop up the East-West confrontation.

Now that that confrontation has come to an end, we may legitimately expect some detente in international relations and, accordingly, a redefinition of the doctrine of deterrence.

If anything, however, the situation has even grown more tense. In April 1999, a military alliance stated that nuclear weapons would remain a component of its military posture, which takes us further from the goals of the NPT, since this Treaty is the cornerstone for all efforts towards this end, both with regard to non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, which should be accessible to all countries.

A treaty banning fissile materials for the manufacture of nuclear weapons could mark the next stage in our efforts to build on the momentum that came out of the last review of the NPT, but, if this Treaty is to be a real accomplishment in the work of disarmament as we understand it, stockpiles must also be taken into consideration. We know the various views on this point. If this issue could be negotiated by a special committee, which, in our view, should be established as soon as possible this would enable us to explore these issues in depth with a view to concluding, at the earliest possible stage, a treaty on this matter, which would mark an important step along the road to nuclear disarmament.

Prevention of an arms race in outer space is another task that we must not neglect. This issue constitutes another aspect of global security. Outer space is the common heritage of all humankind and should never be militarized. If this were to happen, it would only encourage a return to the arms race, with all the attendant dangers. The existing treaties which provide for the non-militarization of outer space should be strengthened by a treaty or a convention solemnly enshrining this principle and this priority is also one which our Conference must not ignore.

Our response to these challenges requires each of us to manifest a spirit of dialogue and openness. Only on this condition will we be able genuinely to launch our work programme and to live up to the expectations of the international community.

Only in this case will those among us who long ago renounced any ambition of the military use of the atom and opted instead for the development of its civil and peaceful use be confirmed in the rightness of our choice.

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Clearly, all these issues are part of a larger framework, that of the definition of a collective security now at the dawn of the third millennium and, therefore, the definition of a world in which we wish to live and which we hope to hand on to future generations.

It is for this reason that the stalemate in the Conference causes us such disquiet and it is our sincere hope that the Conference will be able to bridge the divergences among its members and live up to the expectations of the international community with regard to peace and security.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Algeria for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Peru.

Mr. LAURIE-ESCANDON (Peru) (translated from Spanish): I have requested the floor to convey our gratitude for your expressions of solidarity with our people in the tragic situation currently afflicting Peru as a result of the severe earthquake and the aftershocks which continue to be felt. My country is working on its recovery, thanks to the efforts of all our fellow countrymen and the generous assistance provided by various countries in the international community. It is the sincere wish of my delegation that the sort of efforts and resources that have been mobilized, at both national and international levels, in response to a natural disaster such as that which has just struck Peru, could serve as an example for the prevention of another type of disaster, resulting this time from the hand of man. I also take the opportunity to convey our pleasure at seeing you assume the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you every success in its meetings, and to pledge the full support of the delegation of Peru in your work.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): If no other delegation wishes to take the floor, that concludes our work for today. We have also concluded the second part of the 2001 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 2 August 2001, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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2 August 2001

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND EIGHTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 2 August 2001, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Carlos Amat Forés (Cuba)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 880th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As you will have observed, there is a Japanese television crew in the room to film aspects of today's plenary meeting. This film crew is covering the work of various disarmament bodies for a television programme in its country, under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, on the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Today we have on our list of speakers the distinguished representative of Ukraine, Mr. Mykhailo Skuratovskyi, but before giving him the floor, and with your approval, I think it would be useful to report to the Conference on the consultations which, as President of the Conference, I have been holding during the intersessional period.

As you are aware, the period remaining for our presidency is barely three weeks. We therefore have to be very realistic and objective regarding the goals that we could achieve as we complete our term of office. We have used the intersessional period to begin consultations and it is our intention to contact as many delegations as possible in the next few weeks.

The comments which I am about to make are therefore very preliminary and once we have advanced in our consultations I think that we will have a more complete picture of the positions prevailing among the various members of the Conference.

I can say that so far we have seen many indications of support from all the delegations contacted in the discussions which we have had.

The great majority of delegations have indicated that they think it would be very difficult to make headway on substantive issues in these final weeks of the Conference's work.

Nonetheless, we have seen unanimous interest in maintaining the Conference on Disarmament, particularly its credibility, and in ensuring that it remains the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament. There is a broadly shared position that we should pursue our efforts and not allow ourselves to be discouraged, however complex the circumstances may be.

We have also observed that there is a high level of expectation regarding the possible implications which the current dynamics of international events could have for the work of the Conference. Special attention is being paid by delegations to developments in recent talks taking place at the highest level among the main Powers.

The contacts that we have had as well as the information that we have obtained so far in presidential consultations show that what is referred to as the Amorim proposal continues to enjoy a high level of support as a basis for continuing consultations on the programme of work. With respect to the specific modalities for advancing on this matter there are two basic trends.

(The President)

First of all, a group of countries is of the view that the only viable option for reaching agreement on a programme of work for the Conference is through a package formula that would respect those relations which have been established in practice concerning various substantive issues. The other position is that several delegations are of the view that there are no real possibilities of achieving a package solution and those other delegations are therefore inclined to take up separately some of the substantive items included in the Amorim proposal, starting negotiations on those issues on which it is possible to proceed in this way. We have, moreover, seen that there is broad support by delegations for the work of the three special coordinators who were appointed during the presidency of Ambassador Camilo Reyes, and we have also seen that there is a preparedness to contribute to the work of those three special coordinators.

I will take this opportunity to ask delegations to consider the appropriateness of replying to the questionnaires prepared by the special coordinators and I would also ask them to participate as actively as possible in the consultations which are convened in that connection so as to lay the bases necessary for making headway on these matters.

While the work being done by the three special coordinators is considered highly useful, there is at the same time a clear awareness of the need to advance on the substantive issues which are of interest to all of us and which in the final analysis constitute the very raison d'être of this body.

In the presidential consultations held on Tuesday, the coordinators of the regional groups basically reaffirmed the positions of the respective groups with which we are already familiar. We have taken due note of this and we will bear this in mind in our future work.

To conclude this presentation on the work which, as President of the Conference, I have been doing so far, I would reiterate that we are open to any suggestions or ideas that members of the Conference might have as to the best way of conducting our business over the next few weeks. We think that it is very important to have an open and transparent on-going dialogue among us all.

I now have the honour, having made that report, to call on the di nguished representative of Ukraine, Mr. Mykhailo Skuratovskyi.

Mr. SKURATOVSKYI (Ukraine): Mr. President, allow me to begin by welcoming your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assuring you of full support and cooperation on the part of the delegation of Ukraine.

Our delegation is equally pleased to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to your predecessors for their tireless efforts to move forward the work of the Conference. Likewise, I wish to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Petrovsky, his Deputy, Mr. Roman-Morey, and the staff of the Secretariat for their valuable support to our wok.

(Mr. Skuratovskyi, Ukraine)

Mr. President, you have inherited from your predecessors the draft decision on the programme of work, as contained in document CD/1624 which our delegation supported not only as a basis for further intensified consultations but also as a basis for possible consensus. Ukraine attaches importance to a number of particular elements of this package. This position reflects our recognition of the role of the Conference in negotiating many important multilateral agreements that have helped to secure the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as our firm conviction that the Conference is capable of continuing to contribute effectively to strengthening international peace and stability.

The voluntary renunciation of nuclear weapons by Ukraine, which exceeded to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon nation in 1994 could hardly be overestimated in the context of the current situation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

These unprecedented steps in parallel with similar actions by other newly-independent States of the former USSR and a renunciation of national nuclear military programmes by others could serve as an example of great moral significance and political courage to be followed.

Having become one of the legal successors of the former USSR to the START-I Treaty, Ukraine has made a significant reduction in strategic offensive armaments deployed on its territory, which equalled the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world. At present Ukraine has embarked upon the third and final phase of reducing strategic arms, which is to be completed by December this year. We are convinced that the START process should be sustained and developed further by decisive steps on the part of State Parties.

Ukraine realizes the important role which the ABM Treaty has played in the last decades in the system of international legal instruments in the sphere of disarmament and arms control. It should be mentioned that last January the Parliament of Ukraine ratified the Memorandum of Understanding on the ABM Treaty, thus logically continuing the policy of our country aimed at its equal participation in treaties ensuring world strategic stability. We believe that the review of national security strategy in the United States should not lead to a deterioration of global strategic stability and a resumption of the arms race. Ukraine understands the necessity of non-conflict adaptation of the ABM Treaty, taking due account of the problems that emerge in connection with the proliferation of missiles and missile technologies, as well as weapons of mass destruction.

Ukraine reaffirms its commitment to the NPT. Our country, which was an active contributor to the successful outcome of last year's Sixth Review Conference on the NPT, the first review conference since the adoption of the decision to extend the Treaty indefinitely, welcomed the important results of this forum. We attach special importance to the adoption by the Review Conference of the action plan on practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the Treaty, which include practical tasks that directly concern the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mr. Skuratovskyi, Ukraine)

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is rightfully regarded as another key element in the architecture of strategic stability and as a major complementary effort in non-proliferation.

We fully share the opinion that the conclusion of the CTBT is standing proof of the continuing relevance of the Conference as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The initial role of the Treaty is significant in its essence: to stop or considerably restrain the nuclear weapon States from upgrading their nuclear arsenals and to prevent the emergence of new Nuclear Weapon States.

Last November the Parliament of Ukraine adopted laws on the ratification of the CTBT and on the ratification of the agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO on activities relating to international monitoring facilities for the CTBT.

We hope that the necessary steps to ratify the CTBT will be taken by all nuclear-weapon nations, which is crucial in the light of their obligation under article VI of the NPT, and this would substantially promote the ratification of the Treaty by other States Parties upon which the entry into force of the CTBT depends.

Another clear priority in the advancement of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament is negotiations on a fissile material cut-of treaty (FMCT). This treaty, in our view, would provide valuable security benefits to both nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States. It is discouraging, especially for the Ukrainian delegation, which presided in 1998 at the time when the Conference established the Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate an FMCT, to note that such negotiations have not progressed.

This particular deadlock in our work might be caused by a lack of the necessary confidence between the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. Our delegation remains committed to negotiating an FMCT and stands ready to participate in this process.

At the same time, we recognize that other aspects of item 1 of the Conference's agenda deserve our attention as well. The Conference has its undeniable role to play in promoting nuclear disarmament, keeping in mind that such a role should be constructive and beneficial to all members of the international community.

Mr. President, to be efficient, the Conference may establish subsidiary bodies by a decision in accordance with the rules of procedure. We all understand that distinctions between the names of the subsidiary bodies are not clear-cut and allow a wide margin of flexibility to reflect the level of political significance of an issue to be negotiated to demonstrate that some items are ripe for negotiations, and because some preparatory pre-negotiation work is necessary with regard to some other issues.

(Mr. Skuratovskyi, Ukraine)

We regret that in the past few years the Conference has missed the opportunity to establish such subsidiary bodies as working groups, technical groups or groups of governmental experts that have proven to be particularly suitable for pre-negotiation activities on technically complex and politically controversial issues.

We applauded the outcome of the efforts of our former President that resulted in the appointment of three special coordinators. However, we reluctantly accept the practice of appointing special coordinators by decision of the Conference and negotiating the mandate of their activities. There is no mention of special coordinators in the Conference's rules of procedure and they should not be regarded as some kind of low-profile subsidiary mechanism. Their tasks and responsibilities are formulated in document CD/1036. The President of the CD is entitled to appoint special coordinators but before proceeding to such appointments the President should secure consensus support from delegations. In this particular case, consensus means that all delegations agree that a particular issue is relevant to its agenda and as such could be considered by the Conference. The aim of a special coordinator's work is to seek the views of delegations and to prepare a mandate of the subsidiary body acceptable to all. Special coordinators on specific issues should be appointed by this procedure.

To give more weight and significance to decisions to be adopted by the Conference on the establishment of subsidiary bodies and on their mandates, their drafting being normally very time-consuming, we propose to include in such decisions a provision stating that a subsidiary body will perform its work until it fulfils its mandate or at least until one delegation withdraws its support for a previously adopted decision.

It is vital for the Conference, in our opinion, to leave behind the practice of annually reopening the same procedural discussions which distract us from reaching agreement on how to deal with substantive issues. The delegations' work should cease concealing itself behind the anonymous façade of presidential consultations. Other options and formats of substantive discussions should be explored, including those proposed by the Foreign Minister of Ukraine in his address to the Conference on 9 March last year. For our part, we are open to the various initiatives put forward by our colleagues with the aim of making the Conference more operational and effective. We believe that such an exploration by joint efforts focusing on the specific interests of individual participants would allow us to change things for the better.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of Ukraine for his statement and for the kind words which he has addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. MAIOLINI (Italy): Since I am taking the floor for the first time since your accession to the presidency, Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you and to assure you of the complete cooperation of my delegation in the fulfilment of your high responsibilities. I took note with appreciation of your intensive consultations to reach a consensus formula on the three outstanding issues which always deserve our utmost attention.

(Mr. Maiolini, Italy)

Furthermore, let me commend the work done so far by the three special coordinators on the reform of the Conference. All of them have submitted letters to the delegations to the Conference, assessing the issues and possibilities within their respective competence, giving information, and sometimes an evaluation, on these very issues. Two of the special coordinators have been asking delegations for written contributions. To these requests Italy has replied promptly, offering its preliminary ideas.

Briefly, as far as the agenda is concerned, my delegation has stated its opinion on the following points: respect of the Decalogue; introduction of the principle of the automatic elimination from the agenda of those items for which there have not been proposals for the appointment of subsidiary bodies or special coordinators for many years (this would apply in the case of the present agenda to some items like item 2: on the prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters, and item 5: new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons as well as radiological weapons); the automatic inclusion in the agenda of any item assigned to the Conference by a consensual resolution of the United Nations General Assembly; and updating of the current agenda through the inclusion in it of current issues (this could apply on the basis of consensus, for example, to missile proliferation and to regional disarmament).

As concerns the expansion of membership of the Conference, my delegation has expressed its positive position. We not only support the membership of the four remaining members of the European Union but are also not against the principle of the universalization of our body. For us, democracy is not in contrast with efficiency. In any case, with 22 applications for membership, we cannot keep to the *status quo*. In the case of a consensual decision for only a limited expansion of the membership, we would support the criteria that new members should be considered according to priority based on the date of application for membership and according to the interest shown by the applicants as observers in the work of the Conference.

On the issue of the effective functioning of the Conference, the invitation of the special coordinator is to take part today in the next informal consultations. It is an invitation which we gladly accept.

Mr. President, the reform of the Conference just now is the only active item on our agenda, so we have decided that it is up to us to make it a success and to strive for it. We therefore have to engage all our efforts in favour of an open debate, flexible positions, good will and political determination to push ahead three interlinked subjects which might ease our activity in the Conference.

We know that when there is the necessary political will, member States will strike deals, even without the reform of the Conference, and we know as well that when there is no political will, no reform of the Conference could ever be effective enough. But in the case of reform, Mr. President, we are far from those extreme situations. We are in the grey area where our activity will benefit from more simple procedures, from a larger participation of the international community, and from an automatically updated agenda.

(Mr. Maiolini, Italy)

Burdensome procedures and time-consuming rules and procedures do not serve us well. For this reason, Mr. President, allow me to encourage all my distinguished colleagues fully to engage their delegations in the forthcoming discussions.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of Italy for his statement and the kind words which he has addressed to the Chair. We are sure that he has been heard with keen interest because these are points which are actually before us for consideration at this time.

I do not have any other speakers on my list for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor.

That does not seem to be the case, and I would not wish to carry on and miss the opportunity to extend on behalf of us all a cordial welcome to the distinguished representative of Bangladesh, Ambassador Ali, who is taking part for the first time in the plenary of our Conference. You may be sure, Ambassador, that we shall extend to you our fullest cooperation and support and that we look forward to hearing the always important statements from your country to which we have become accustomed at this Conference. You are very welcome to our Conference.

The representative of Bangladesh has the floor.

Mr. ALI (Bangladesh): Thank you, Mr. President, for your warm words welcoming me to this meeting. May I, at the same time, take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair. It is a privilege to attend a meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, a body devoted to a noble task and lofty ideals. I am also honoured to represent my Government in this important negotiating body. For Bangladesh, issues of disarmament are vital. Our first and foremost priority is economic development. The Government and the people of Bangladesh would like to see all available resources, both manpower and material, addressing our need for social and economic development. In our view, the concept of disarmament plays a vital role in this process. It is through disarmament that resources can be released for advancing the welfare of humankind.

I look forward to working closely with all my distinguished colleagues in this Chamber. It shall be my endeavour, during the period that I represent Bangladesh in this august body, to try my utmost to advance the goals and objectives of this body. May I also assure you, Mr. President, of the full cooperation of my delegation in your efforts to advance the agenda of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of Bangladesh for his statement and the kind words which he has addressed to the Chair.

Distinguished colleagues, you may recall that at the 871st plenary meeting, on 22 March 2001, the President of the Conference informed us that he had received a note verbale from the Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea stating that it had

(The President)

decided not to take on the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for the period from 20 August to 31 December 2001. Accordingly, the President requested the Secretariat to approach the next country on the list of members of the Conference, namely, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to ascertain whether it would be prepared to assume the presidency for this period. Last Tuesday, the Secretariat informed us that it had received a letter from the Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo informing it that his delegation would not be in a position to assume the presidency of the Conference.

In light of the above, and in accordance with the rules of procedure and with established practice, the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament during the period from 20 August to 31 December 2001 shall be assumed by the next country on the list of members of the Conference, namely, Ecuador.

I should now like to invite you to take a decision on the request of Saudi Arabia to participate as an observer in the work of the Conference during this session, without having first considered it in an informal plenary. Copies of this request have been placed earlier in delegations' boxes and are also before you now in document CD/WP.519.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite Saudi Arabia to participate as an observer in our work, in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It is so decided.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

That does not appear to be the case.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to recall that, as announced at the presidential consultations on Tuesday, the special coordinator, Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, will convene, immediately after this plenary meeting, informal open-ended consultations on improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 9 August 2001, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.881
9 August 2001

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Thursday, 9 August 2001, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Carlos Amat Forés (Cuba)

GE.01-64128 (E) 150801 100901

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 881st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

According to the Secretariat, there is no speaker inscribed on the list for today and I will therefore outline briefly to you the results of my consultations with several delegations.

In our capacity as President, we have continued an intensive process of discussions, trying to cover a wide range of delegations from the various groups comprising the Conference. It is our intention to continue this endeavour, carrying out consultations during this week and next week. The preliminary comments that we are in a position to make, on the basis of the information that we have been receiving and the exchanges of views that we have been holding are as follows.

First of all, we have seen broad indications of support from all the delegations with whom we have held discussions for the efforts being carried out by the Chair to find a common denominator that could make it possible to overcome the stalemate which we have been facing with regard to the substantive items in our programme of work. We welcome this support and have been encouraged to continue with our efforts.

With that backing we have been exploring all the possibilities within our reach. We have been trying to find approaches that would enable us, if not to resolve the problem in its entirety, then at least to make some steps forward, however small, that would open up the way to progress and create conditions conducive to attaining a consensus on the programme of work.

Nonetheless, the discussions which we have held have reaffirmed that events outside of the Conference, in particular the current strategic and security scenario at the international level, have a negative impact on and affect this forum far more than the majority of us would wish.

There is a high level of expectation regarding the possible implications for the work of the Conference that the current dynamics of international events might have. At the same time, the majority of delegations would appear to be inclined to think that prospects for the immediate future of the Conference are not very encouraging.

Also, there has been a view widely shared by many delegations that one element of additional difficulty is the limited time remaining for the annual session of the Conference and this undermines efforts to advance with respect to substantive issues in the programme of work.

In this difficult situation, an encouraging sign has been the wish of delegations to maintain the credibility of the Conference and its existence as the sole multilateral negotiating forum for all matters relating to treaties on disarmament.

Even though at present the real possibilities of advancing and reaching a consensus regarding the programme of work are very limited, the majority of delegations have emphasized the need to retain what we have referred to as the "Amorim proposal" as the basis for continuing consultations.

(The President)

It is recognized that this proposal constitutes the summing up of a series of efforts made by members of the Conference and its successive presidents with a view to attaining a consensus.

The intention of the Chair is still to keep that proposal intact, unless in the next few days we see clear signals of real possibilities for advancing by changing it in some way.

Also, during the consultations we have noted broad support from delegations for the work of the three special coordinators appointed during the presidency of Ambassador Camilo Reyes of Colombia, and a preparedness to continue with that work.

Many delegations are of the view that the appointment of these special coordinators constitutes a positive sign and a means of keeping the Conference active until such time as we have managed to overcome the current stalemate relating to the substantive items.

It is important to highlight the fact that, while we consider the work being done by the special coordinators to be most useful, there is broad awareness among delegations of the need to move forward on the substantive items which in the final analysis constitute the main raison d'être of this body.

In the open and informal consultations held last Thursday at the request of the special coordinator on improved and effective functioning of the Conference, the distinguished representative of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam, we noted the very active participation of delegations. That meeting, in our opinion, was a clear indication of the need to have reasonable time to continue the process of discussion recently started on the three items allocated to the special coordinators and possibly to reach consensual agreements.

In this connection, we are examining the level of acceptance of the possibility of recommending that the mandate of the special coordinators be continued during the session for the year 2002. If our research yields positive results, we would proceed to make recommendations to that effect to the next President, who, as everyone is aware, will be from Ecuador, for inclusion in the report of this session.

These, then, are our observations regarding the consultations that we have conducted.

May I ask whether any delegation wishes to take the floor?

That does not appear to be the case.

We have thus completed our business for today.

The next plenary meeting will be held on Thursday, 16 August, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.882
16 August 2001

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 16 August 2001, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Carlos Amat Forés (Cuba)

GE.01-64181 (E) 220801 270901

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 882nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished colleagues, I have been informed that Ambassador Petko Draganov of Bulgaria will soon be leaving Geneva due to the fact that his Government has assigned him other important duties in his country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Draganov has been with us since 6 August 1998. During his stay here he defended the position of his Government with authority and diplomatic talent, and entered into close links with all of us in the Conference. His contribution to our collective efforts to achieve consensus showed in all its splendour when he chaired the final part of the session of the Conference for the year 2000. His diplomatic talent was also recognized this year when the Conference appointed him special coordinator on the expansion of the Conference. I am sure that you all share my wishes of success for Ambassador Draganov in his future duties, and we are certain that he will also continue to contribute to the best development of our activities. We would like to wish Ambassador Draganov well and great success in his new duties.

Ambassador Draganov has the floor.

Mr. DRAGANOV (Bulgaria): Thank you, Mr. President, for your kind words.

Mr. President, this happens to be my first intervention under your presidency, and, although you may be chairing your last plenary meeting, please allow me formally to convey my warmest congratulations and personal satisfaction on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Rest assured of my delegation's continued support and high appreciation.

Let me also congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Reyes of Colombia, and express my delegation's gratitude for the energy applied and the excellent work done under his presidency. The appointment of special coordinators on the effective functioning, the agenda and the expansion of the Conference on Disarmament is a welcome and much-needed positive signal emanating from our negotiating body. For reasons beyond my control, this is, again, the first time I have taken the floor in plenary since that appointment, and I would like to stress my wholehearted gratitude for the trust with which I was honoured as special coordinator on the expansion of the Conference.

Alas, Mr. President, this is also my last statement to the Conference on Disarmament, as I am being recalled by my Government to serve in another capacity. The result of my disarmament activities must have been so impressive that it was decided to put an end to them urgently and give me an assignment which, among other things, may actually include overseeing some measure of rearmament activity.

Looking back, I recall my first appearance in this solemn hall and my first statement here. It was on the very day that the Conference was able to adopt, after prolonged negotiation, the

(Mr. Draganov, Bulgaria)

decision to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on FMCT. I remember it well. Delegations expressed great satisfaction. Colleagues came up to me and congratulated me for bringing good luck to the Conference.

I wonder. Probably because I was still new to this Conference, I did not quite grasp why this decision was being given so much importance that day. I figured the really important time would be when the Conference got down to real negotiations on an agreement per se. But, like I said, it was back then, and I was still a green hand. I know better now.

For the last three years my delegation has consistently endeavoured to make a substantive contribution to our work. My main goal throughout this time has been to create, by means of effective networking, a better understanding of the problems that we face and a more common vision of ways to achieve progress. I had the honour to chair the "like-minded group" of countries on anti-personnel landmines. I was privileged to preside over the Conference on Disarmament and to present its 2000 annual report to the United Nations General Assembly. I am consulting on the expansion of the Conference. But three years seem so short now. And I still find myself involved in pre-negotiating intensive consultations on possible agreements on eventual substance. It sounds frustrating and, often enough, it is frustrating.

Yet, I do not feel my time here has been wasted. On the contrary, I feel immensely enriched by the experience. I have discovered first-hand just how much hard work international arms control, peace and security require. I have made many friends and I have lots of unfinished business left. So, I will be back.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all colleagues for the advice, the cooperation and the goodwill that I have enjoyed during my tour of duty. Let me say a special word of acknowledgement for the custodian of our proceedings, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and for his deputy, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey. I would like to commend all the members of the Secretariat for their energy and competence, and - last, but not least - the interpreters, for their skill and tolerance.

There we go. I am now officially into my third page, so my good friend and colleague Frank Majoor would not hold it against me if I conclude here.

Thank you, Mr. President, and good luck to you all.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank you, Ambassador, for your kind words. Having listened to you I think that if this Conference does not make progress we will feel compelled to ask your Government to reappoint you here to see whether you can bring good luck to us again. In any event, I wish you the best of luck in your next duties.

According to the secretariat, there are no speakers on my list for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

(The President)

That does not seem to be the case, and hence I would like, with your leave, to make a final statement upon the conclusion of Cuba's presidency of the Conference.

Dear ambassadors, distinguished delegates, we are gathered here today at the last plenary meeting corresponding to our period in the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, which is about to end.

We have tried to fulfil with dedication the high responsibility which was entrusted to us. We have held weeks of intensive consultations, which have involved the great majority of members of the Conference. Time constraints as well as the unavailability of some delegations prevented direct consultations with all of them.

Today we are bringing here no spectacular announcement. Our presidency will not be marked by what might have been named the "Amat proposal", aimed at resolving the existing difficulties in adopting a programme of work for the Conference.

Perhaps the only criticism that I could make to my dear friend, Ambassador Camilo Reyes, is that, at the moment we succeeded him in the presidency, he forgot to give us the magic wand that makes possible a solution to all the problems. I express, in advance, my apologies to my successor and friend, Ambassador Roberto Betancourt from Ecuador, because, even though we would like to give him a magic wand, I myself do not have one either.

Our consultations confirmed that the Amorim proposal continues to enjoy wide support as the basis for reaching a consensus on the programme of work of the Conference and it sums up in itself most of the efforts that the members of the Conference and its successive presidents have made over the years. As a working basis, we adopt the principle of keeping the Amorim proposal intact, unless real possibilities of moving forward by introducing some changes emerge.

Although some may not share this approach, we have the conviction that it was the most convenient way of proceeding in the present situation. In our view, to begin introducing modifications to the Amorim proposal without real prospects of success would be a step backward instead of forward.

During our mandate, we have tried to work with the greatest transparency, giving detailed information at each plenary meeting and in the presidential consultations about the course of our work. At the same time, we can say today that, with the discretion that sometimes this kind of initiative requires, at a certain moment during our presidency, we tried to advance some possible compromise formulas with some of the major players.

Unfortunately, after those actions it was absolutely clear to us that, at least for the time being, there are not the minimum conditions for the Conference to agree on a programme of work or to move forward on substantive issues.

We have not come here to point out those who are responsible for the lack of substantive advances in the Conference. That is not my role as President and we do not believe it would

(The President)

contribute to achieving solutions. But it does not mean that truths should be hidden. It is a secret for no one that certain countries have a particularly significant leading role in the present situation of lack of agreement on a programme of work for the Conference. We all know that there are key decisions that have to be made outside the Conference in order to allow a real advance in it. Not only do such decisions continue not to materialize, but also it is an undeniable reality that a new international scenario, which is at the least worrisome, is being formed and could possibly have very negative implications for the work of the Conference in particular and for multilateralism in general. In fact, our contacts made it evident that a great number of delegations tend to think that the prospects for the immediate future of the Conference are not encouraging.

On the one hand, the great majority wish to preserve the Conference as the unique multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament will make it very difficult, at least in the short term, for the Conference to be wound up. Nevertheless, if the periods without real advances in substantive work were to continue, this body's credibility would be seriously affected. That would serve the interests only of those who prefer to take action outside the Conference, disregarding the interests and the positions of the rest of the international community.

Distinguished ambassadors and delegates, we have perceived great willingness on the part of delegations to contribute to the work of the three special coordinators appointed during the presidency of Ambassador Camilo Reyes. Such appointments were, without any doubt, an important practical step forward whose effects should be neither overestimated, nor belittled. While we unconditionally support the coordinators' work, we are also convinced that all possible efforts should continue to be made in order to try to advance on substantive issues which are ultimately the main raison d'être of this body.

Turning the work on procedural issues into a kind of permanent substitute for the Conference's substantive work should be avoided by all means. The Conference's procedures and methods of work can and should be improved, but they cannot be held responsible for the lack of results in our work. Although its constant repetition can make it an empty phrase, it is an unquestionable truth that the key lies in the political will and flexibility of all members of the Conference. We would not be able to advance much without that.

This week we had the opportunity to carry out an interesting and useful exchange with the three special coordinators regarding the course of their work. I would like to congratulate them for the professionalism and dedication with which they are fulfilling their responsibilities. I also want to use this occasion to encourage all interested delegations that have not yet done so to contribute with their opinions in reply to the questionnaires prepared by the coordinators.

Taking into account the short time available, it will be difficult for the special coordinators to conclude their work at this session. During our extensive consultations, we have noted a wide convergence of opinions with regard to the appropriateness of ensuring the continuity of the coordinators' work. To this end, I would suggest that the next President, when

(The President)

preparing the Conference's draft annual report, should consider the possibility of reflecting in it this convergence of opinions and possibly including a recommendation for giving continuity to the work of the coordinators next year.

In order to have the most objective possible assessment of the course of the coordinators' work, likewise the possibility of annexing the interim reports on their work to the Conference's annual report could be considered. The Conference on Disarmament is a body of vital importance and it should therefore be preserved in the present situation and should be ready to act as soon as the necessary conditions arise. This is not the time to let pessimism prevail, and we must continue to contribute, with our common efforts, to making this forum work in accordance with its very high responsibilities.

Distinguished colleagues, having said the above, allow me to use this opportunity now to say a few words as the representative of Cuba.

It is our position that the programme of work of the Conference should reflect the present challenges and the interests and priorities of the international community, and not those of only a few countries. It is worrisome that the Conference cannot move forward in its substantive work, including on such key issues as nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, due to the inflexible positions of some countries. There are still thousands of nuclear weapons in the world which threaten the very survival of humanity and we cannot stand idly by and let such dangers be passed on to future generations. The top priority of nuclear disarmament cannot be unknown, and no one can presume that this is an issue to be resolved in the back of the international community. Pretexts cannot continue to be made for impeding the elimination of the possibility of a nuclear war and the threats deriving from the very existence of nuclear weapons.

Various recent examples, such as the cases of the Kyoto Protocol, the preservation of the ABM Treaty, the Programme of Action of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade of Small and Light Weapons, and the negotiations of the Verification Protocol to the Convention on Biological Weapons, among others, show that unless we do something in time, we will run the risk of allowing unilateralism based on power and narrow national interests to prevail in the world. For many countries, including my own, multilateralism has key importance and it should be preserved by any means. We cannot remain indifferent to the real possibility that some powerful countries even feel comfortable making decisions on disarmament which affect us all, and do so outside the multilateral forums, particularly the Conference on Disarmament. Multilateralism is a fundamental responsibility that all States have. Moreover, it is a task that cannot be accomplished without the valuable support of other important players, such as non-governmental organizations and the media. International public opinion should be aware of the risks that we are all running and of the need to act in order to avoid them.

Now I reassume my functions as President and I would like to conclude by expressing my gratitude once again for the countless expressions of support that we have received from delegations during our mandate. I could also not fail to pay a special tribute to all the members of the secretariat of the Conference, including officials, interpreters, translators and other support

(The President)

staff, for the excellent assistance given for our work. We are particularly grateful to His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Secretary-General of the Conference, with whom we had the opportunity to hold one of the most interesting meetings during our presidency; to His Excellency Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General, for his permanent concern and advice; and also to Ms. Jenifer Mackby, Mr. Jerzy Zaleski and Mrs. Charlotte Laut Hernández, and others, whose dedication and professionalism very much facilitated our work.

I wish the greatest success to the distinguished Ambassador of Ecuador, Mr. Roberto Betancourt, who will assume the presidency of the Conference from 20 August to 31 December 2001. It is hardly necessary to assure him that he can always count on the support and cooperation of our delegation.

Thank you all very much.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not appear to be the case

Now, with regard to the timetable of meetings for next week, I would like to recall the decision on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament adopted at the 575th plenary meeting of the Conference on 21 August 1990 (document CD/1036) and, in particular, its paragraph 4, pursuant to which the Conference shall hold two plenary meetings for, inter alia, two middle weeks (weeks 21 and 22) of the third part of the annual session. This year, the twenty-first week of the session begins next Monday, 20 August, and the twenty-second week begins on Monday, 27 August.

At this stage, there are no speakers for next week. However, the special coordinator on improved and effective functioning of the Conference, Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, has expressed his intention to hold the second informal open-ended consultations on Tuesday, 21 August 2001, at 11.30 a.m., in the Council Chamber.

Furthermore, the special coordinator on the review of the agenda of the Conference, Ambassador Seibert of Germany, intends to convene informal open-ended consultations on this subject immediately following the plenary meeting on Thursday, 23 August 2001.

Accordingly, the timetable for next week is as follows: on Tuesday, 21 August 2001, at 11.30 a.m., informal open-ended consultations on improved and effective functioning of the Conference; and on Thursday, 23 August 2001, at 10.00 a.m., the next plenary meeting of the Conference, followed by informal open-ended consultations on review of the agenda of the Conference. All these meetings will be held in the Council Chamber.

Again, I would like to thank you all for your cooperation. As of next Monday I hand over the presidency of the Conference to the Ambassador of Ecuador.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.883
23 August 2001

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 23 August 2001, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Roberto Betancourt Ruales (Ecuador)

GE.01-64498 (E) 110901 021001

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish). I declare open the 883rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset I should like to extend a cordial welcome, on behalf of all the members of the Conference on Disarmament, to Ambassador Toufik Salloum, who has assumed responsibility as the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, and to assure him of our full cooperation and support.

I have only one speaker on my list for today but, before giving him the floor, I would like first to make an opening statement on Ecuador's assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament.

Ambassadors, Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen: allow me to say that I feel extremely honoured at the privilege, as representative of Ecuador, of taking over the presidency of this body, the key multilateral forum for negotiations in the field of disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and arms control. This is the first time that Ecuador has assumed this honour, having been accepted as a member of the Conference on Disarmament in 1999, the year when my country finally achieved this long-standing aspiration of its foreign policy, the fulfilment of 16 years of waiting and untiring effort.

Ecuador joined the Conference on Disarmament in the belief that a world free of nuclear weapons is not only a dream but an urgent necessity and that this organization is able to take care of the security requirements of all States and, in particular, to safeguard the rights of those that do not possess nuclear weapons.

Ecuador supports objectives such as the intensitifiation and irreversibility of the nuclear disarmament process through the elimination and destruction of those weapons. It has backed international efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament and is a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. My country has supported specific initiatives, such as the convening of an international conference to determine the best ways of eliminating nuclear risks.

Ecuador is in favour of the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones, because it believes that such zones strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation system and contribute to the achievement of nuclear disarmament. In this conviction, Ecuador took an active part in preparing the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which declared Latin America a nuclear-weapon-free zone. In 1999, Ecuador coordinated the working group of the United Nations Disarmament Commission which set out guidelines for the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

As I assume this delicate responsibility, I feel bound to acknowledge the skilful and creative work undertaken in the exploration of options and holding of consultations by the former presidents of the Conference on Disarmament in their endeavour to build the necessary consensus to approve a programme of work for the Conference. Special mention should be made of the valuable contribution of the distinguished Latin American diplomat, Ambassador Camilo Reyes of Colombia, who led the members of the Conference on

(The President)

Disarmament in adopting the decision to appoint three special coordinators. That decision merited due recognition by the members, as it provides a mechanism which, we hope, will be a valuable contribution to the future of the Conference. I therefore feel that it should be preserved in the general interest. I shall make sure that the decision is included in the next report of the Conference on Disarmament to the United Nations General Assembly.

On taking over the presidency, Ecuador notes with deep concern that, notwithstanding the considerable diplomatic efforts made by the previous 18 presidents of the Conference on Disarmament, who have held this office since 1999, it has not been possible to reverse the situation of paralysis which prevails within this body, in which serious differences regarding crucial matters are threatening the very raison d'être of the Conference and rendering it impossible for us to approve its programme of work.

This situation notwithstanding, we renew our trust and support all efforts aimed at reactivating the purpose for which the Conference on Disarmament was created. The Conference has a very clear mandate to promote and preserve international peace and security through the elimination of nuclear weapons and arms reduction and control.

During the period of Ecuador's presidency, no changes are expected in the climate of stagnation described earlier, especially since the strategic scenario and international security situation still appear broadly responsible for determining progress towards any form of consensus.

We are approaching the end of the third part of the Conference's 2001 session and the prospects for moving ahead with the treatment of substantive matters do not appear encouraging. Nevertheless, it would not be reasonable to exclude the possibility in the future of arriving at a new consensus decision which would allow us to move forward along the road that lies ahead before the Conference on Disarmament. In any event, I believe that in the time available we shall be able only to prepare the ground for next year's session.

Aware of our responsibility, we reaffirm our undertaking to work towards reactivating the purpose of the Conference on Disarmament and, in particular, its capacity for action. To this end, Ecuador will explore all consultation mechanisms at its disposal.

In this spirit, and using as a basis the proposal contained in document CD/1624 submitted by Ambassador Amorim, together with the valuable recommendations of the presidents of the Conference on Disarmament who preceded me in this office, I propose to continue undertaking consultations with a view to identifying possible ways of arriving at a consensus for agreeing on a programme of work for the Conference.

In addition, in response to the recommendation put forward by the distinguished Cuban Ambassador, Mr. Carlos Amat Forés, aimed at maintaining activities within the small area of discussion and negotiation established in the framework of action of the three special coordinators, I should like, in consultation with delegations, to identify the best formula for ensuring that this work should continue and to find out how the members of the Conference on Disarmament would like to deal with the first reports on those activities.

(The President)

In any event, it is clear that the work of the coordinators, which is fully supported by this presidency and by the members of the Conference on Disarmament, can in no way replace the main activity for which the Conference on Disarmament is responsible with respect to the substantive matters of the programme of work.

I should like to express my thanks to the distinguished Cuban Ambassador, Mr. Carlos Amat Forés, my predecessor, for his intensive efforts to promote a consensus with regard to agreeing on a programme of work and for allowing me to share the valuable information which he gathered in the course of his consultations. Finally, I should like to thank all delegations for the support which, I feel sure, you will give to the presidency.

I now give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Belgium.

Mr. LINT (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, I should like, first of all, to congratulate you on your assumption of the office of President of the Conference on Disarmament. You may be assured that you can count on the full cooperation of Belgium in your new office.

I have taken the floor to inform the Conference that, in their capacity as co-chairs of the Standing Committee of Experts on the General Status and Operation of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, Zimbabwe and Belgium will be organizing, in conjunction with Nicaragua, an information meeting on the Third Meeting of the States parties, to be held in Managua from 18 to 21 September 2001.

The information meeting will be held on 29 August from 2 to 3 p.m., in room VII at the Palais des Nations. All delegations are invited to attend. On that occasion they will receive all the Conference documents that are currently available.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that, to date, 118 States have ratified or acceded to the Convention and 140 States have signed, ratified or acceded to it. Belgium encourages all States which are not yet parties to the Convention to ratify it and to accede to it as soon as possible.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Belgium for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

Is there any other delegation which wishes to take the floor?

As this does not appear to be the case, I would like to recall that, with regard to the timetable of meetings for the coming weeks, the Conference shall hold two plenary meetings next week, in accordance with paragraph 4 of the decision on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament contained in document CD/1036.

In this connection, the secretariat has informed me that both the Special Coordinator on the Improved and Effective Functioning of the Conference, Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, and the Special Coordinator on the Expansion of the Membership of the Conference,

(The President)

Ambassador Petko Draganov of Bulgaria, or a member of his delegation acting on his behalf, intend to submit their respective reports on the Conference on Tuesday, 28 August 2001. Accordingly, in addition to the plenary meeting on Thursday, 30 August 2001, another plenary meeting will be scheduled on Tuesday, 28 August 2001, to accommodate their requests.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to recall that, as announced last Thursday, the Special Coordinator, Ambassador Günther Seibert of Germany, will convene, immediately after this plenary meeting, informal open-ended consultations on the review of the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

That concludes our business for today.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.884
28 August 2001

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 28 August 2001, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Roberto Betancourt Ruales (Ecuador)

GE.01-64505 (E) 110901 021001

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 884th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have one speaker on my list for today, Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, Special Coordinator on the Improved and Effective Functioning of the Conference, who wishes to report to us on his consultations on this issue.

I give the floor to Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam, Special Coordinator on the Improved and Effective Functioning of the Conference.

Mr. KARIYAWASAM (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor during your presidency, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of this high office and please be assured of the full cooperation of my delegation in fulfilling your responsibilities. I also would like to express my appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Carlos Amat Forés of Cuba, for his efficient and professional conduct as the President of the Conference, characteristic of all Cuban diplomats.

At its 877th meeting, on 14 June 2001, the Conference on Disarmament decided to appoint, among others, a special coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament, as a result of sustained efforts on the part of the then President, Ambassador Camilo Reyes Rodriguez of Colombia. Pursuant to this decision, I was appointed and was mandated to take into account all proposals and views, as well as future initiatives, in discharging my work. The Conference also requested the special coordinator to report to it before the conclusion of its 2001 session. I wish to take this opportunity to thank my group, the Group of 21, as well as all members of the Conference, for the trust placed in me by assigning me this onerous task.

The decision to appoint a special coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference is, I believe, evidence that the membership of the Conference on Disarmament agrees in principle that there is a need and a desire to adopt measures for the further improvement of the functioning of the Conference. Yet, even though we all agreed on the need for reform, it seems that firm decisions on any issue continue to elude us. The reasons for this impasse are apparent and have been referred to by some of the speakers who have chosen to take the floor in this forum. Some have also emphasized that work on procedure should not be construed as an alternative to work on substance. Many believe that the inability of this Conference to conduct substantive work is not a procedural matter, but rather a substantive political issue. As a result, the link between substance and procedure has also come under sharper scrutiny. Many also believe, however, that at these difficult times for the Conference we could innovate or streamline our procedures so as to promote a semblance of substantive work that can at least be useful and hopefully engender full-fledged substantive negotiations on agreed issues, sooner rather than later.

(Mr. Kariyawasam, Sri Lanka)

During the short period of time available, I have made all efforts to do justice to the mandate given to me. Since 1990 several of my predecessors have worked on this subject, in particular, Ambassador Kamal of Pakistan, Ambassador Zahran of Egypt and Ambassador Illanes of Chile. I have drawn from their work for precedence and for direction. I have also learned from views expressed informally by several delegations and by some in writing. To achieve greater transparency in my work, I conducted two rounds of informal open-ended consultations. I was encouraged by the level of attendance and the number of delegations who participated in these consultations. While many delegations took the floor and expressed their views, a number of delegations did not offer views on any issue or only on some. I believe that this reluctance was either by choice or perhaps by default. Either way, the omnipresence of the rule of consensus means that my conclusions in this report are of an ad referendum nature.

Mr. President, in the consultations, I provided an indicative list of issues for discussion with a view to directing the work in a useful manner. These items were not exhaustive and I welcomed new proposals from delegations for further deliberation. At the conclusion of my consultations, it was evident that it would not be possible to take any decisions at this session on any of the issues. There are a few issues, however, on which there seemed to be a greater degree of understanding and agreement.

Permit me now to comment on specific issues that were considered during discussions. These in my view fall into two broad categories. The first group of issues, to my mind, seems to enjoy a general level of agreement among delegations. The other set of issues requires much more work if a higher level of understanding among delegates is to be attained.

Issues that enjoy a level of general agreement are the following:

First, the Conference has not made optimal use of mechanisms provided for in the rules of procedure. According to some, several rules are either misinterpreted or simply ignored. Many were of the opinion that such rules are outdated and require updating to remove ambiguities. In this regard, CD/1036, which was adopted in August 1990, came under scrutiny and discussion. There was a proposal, supported by many, to amend paragraph 5 (d) of CD/1036 to make it less ambiguous. The section of CD/1036 which deals with appointing special coordinators in the event of absence of consensus on the establishment of subsidiary bodies or their mandates in the first two weeks after the beginning of the annual session of the Conference merits further consideration. I strongly recommend that we work on this issue with a view to adopting a decision early in the next session. Paragraphs 5 (c) and 7 of CD/1036 were also viewed by some as meriting revival.

Second, wider and more frequent use should be made of informal and open-ended consultations. Some were of the view that the Conference has not used the plenary to full advantage and therefore the President should convene open-ended informal consultations on substantive issues to prepare the ground for the commencement of negotiations.

(Mr. Kariyawasam, Sri Lanka)

Third, the appointment of "friends of the President". General agreement on this measure, however, was qualified by a clear distinction between "friends of the President" and "special coordinators", and it was emphasized that the term of office of "friends" should be coterminous with that of the President who appoints such "friends".

Fourth, the involvement of civil society in some form. There were many different views and perceptions as to how non-governmental organization participation could be operationalized. The apparent absence of any objection to the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the Conference's work may not therefore be construed as a ready acceptance of the unqualified participation of such organizations in the Conference on Disarmament.

Fifth, the role of the secretariat. No delegation expressed any misgivings pertaining to the role of the secretariat.

Sixth, the expansion of the membership of the Conference. While no delegation expressed any views against expansion, there were divergent views as to how such an expansion should take place. This issue was considered fleetingly in the context of its link with the effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament, and my fellow Special Coordinator has conducted further work on this specific issue.

Mr. President, there are several other key issues which require further substantive discussions with a view to arriving at even a general level of understanding. They are:

First and most important, the rule of consensus. This was by far the most keenly scrutinized as well as the most contentious issue during the discussion. Some delegations believed that the rule of consensus as applied in the Conference on Disarmament - the requirement for unanimity on all issues - is the bane of the Conference. They strongly assert that the consensus rule in the Conference on Disarmament should be qualified. At the same time, a number of other representatives were of the opinion that there was no need for any change in the present rule of consensus, given the nature of the work of the Conference and the apparent flexibility which the rule offers to safeguard national interests.

Second, the question of whether to adopt the Conference's agenda and the programme of work annually or otherwise. This was discussed in the context of my mandate, even though the issue was handled by my fellow Special Coordinator. There was no apparent agreement on changing the present status of this issue on its own or in connection with any other issue related to effective functioning.

Third, the efficacy of the present system of groupings. For some, the current system was working well, while there were others who strongly felt that the current group system should be more flexible and informal. There was a desire among some to create "like-minded groups" on the basis of common interests, cutting across the present group system.

(Mr. Kariyawasam, Sri Lanka)

Fourth, the establishment of a new category of committees. While some kept an open mind on creating a new category of committees for substantive discussions on agenda items, others felt that it would lead to a proliferation of mechanisms devoid of any possibility of substantive progress and that such a measure would only impair the efficiency of the Conference.

Fifth, the continuation of the work of pre-existing subsidiary bodies. Many believed that once a subsidiary body was established, it should continue from year to year until such a body completed its mandate or until it became obvious that negotiations could not lead to a successful conclusion. Nevertheless, there were some who felt that the continuation of a subsidiary body beyond a session was illogical since the agenda and the programme of work were required to be adopted first, every year.

Sixth, automatic establishment of ad hoc committees on all agenda items. Many delegations were of the opinion that the automatic establishment of ad hoc committees on all agenda items might prove to be difficult since the Conference might not be ready to engage in substantive work on certain items.

Seventh, the tenure of the Presidency. This was a subject of lively discussion. Some strongly supported a change in the present system of rotation, with several specific ideas as to how to adopt a new system. Nevertheless, there were contrary views that the current system is fair and a necessary means of keeping delegations engaged in the work of the Conference.

Eighth, the annual report. While some supported the idea of having a summary of main issues, themes and initiatives made through plenary statements as part of the report, others were of the view that it was simply a duplication of procedure since verbatim records of the Conference on Disarmament were available.

Ninth, a small group to study the subject of improved and effective functioning of the Conference. While some welcomed this idea, several others believed that this matter was better handled by a special coordinator dealing with the subject, where transparency and wider participation in the work was ensured.

Tenth, the establishment of a bureau of the Conference comprising the President, the Secretary-General and representatives of member States and groups. On this proposal, there were doubts expressed by some as to the need or the efficacy of such a bureau and they expressed misgivings that the establishment of a bureau would be tantamount to the institutionalization of the present process of presidential consultations.

Mr. President, as I mentioned earlier, the reflection of the current geo-political climate in the Conference on Disarmament, as well as time constraints, did not permit us to agree on any specific procedures for the Conference's improved and effective functioning. There was, however, an apparent overwhelming desire to continue with the work of the special coordinators

(Mr. Kariyawasam, Sri Lanka)

on these issues again next year. In this regard, I lend my strong support for the appointment of three new special coordinators early next year so that they will have sufficient space to work towards decisions and conclusions on some of the issues which enjoy a level of general agreement.

May I also take this opportunity to say good-bye to both my fellow special coordinators, Ambassador Petko Draganov of Bulgaria has already left us, having been assigned higher responsibilities. Ambassador Günther Seibert of Germany will leave us shortly on completion of his tour of duty. The Conference, and I personally, will miss the experience and excellent professionalism of these two friendly diplomats, and I wish them all the very best in their future endeavours.

Last, but not least, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference, deserves a special word of thanks for his steady support for my endeavours on this matter. He was present at all times during informal consultations, listening attentively to the views of delegations. He encouraged us to move forward. I wish to thank him and Mr. Román-Morey, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Jerzy Zaleski and the secretariat staff, as well as the interpreters, for the ready support they provided during my tenure as Special coordinator.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the Special Coordinator on the Improved and Effective Functioning of the Conference for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair.

Are there any other delegations wishing to take the floor at this stage?

I would like to recall that the draft report will be available in all official languages in the delegations' pigeon-holes on Thursday, 30 August 2001. It is my intention to proceed to the first reading of the draft report at an informal meeting following the plenary meeting on Tuesday, 4 September 2001.

That concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 30 April 2002, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.885
30 August 2001

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 30 August 2001, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Roberto Betancourt Ruales (Ecuador)

GE.01-64530 (E) 140901 031001

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 885th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representative of China, Ambassador Hu Xiaodi, the Special Coordinator on the Review of the Agenda of the Conference, Ambassador Günther Seibert of Germany, who will present his report on the subject, and the representative of Bulgaria, Mr. Peter Kolarov, who will present a report on behalf of the Special Coordinator on the Expansion of the Membership of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Petko Draganov.

I now give the floor to the representative of China, Ambassador Hu Xiaodi.

Mr. HU (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, at the outset please allow me to express the deep appreciation of the Chinese delegation for your unremitting efforts in facilitating the early start of substantive work by the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to extend our gratitude to your distinguished predecessors, Ambassador Camilo Reyes Rodriguez and Ambassador Carlos Amat Forés for the valuable endeavours they have made towards breaking the deadlock gripping this forum. In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our Secretary-General Mr. Petrovsky, the Deputy Secretary-General Mr. Román-Morey and all other colleagues of the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, for their hard work in providing services of the highest quality to the Conference.

The Chinese delegation has stated on many occasions, both here in the Conference on Disarmament and in other multilateral forums, that international arms control and disarmament efforts are now at a critical crossroads and the question of which path to take has become a major concern for the international community.

We have seen how such major issues facing the international community as, among others, the nuclear weapons reduction process, CTBT and the negotiation of a BWC protocol have come up against unwarranted challenges: it is very likely that weapons and weapon systems will be introduced into outer space; while last year the entire international community, including the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, recognized the ABM Treaty as a cornerstone of global stability, this year we hear voices calling for the total abrogation of this treaty. All these developments are bound to have a profound negative impact on the international security of the twenty-first century and to jeopardize the interests of all States in the world. The arduous task which faces us, therefore, is to preserve international strategic stability and to ensure the integrity and effective implementation of the existing international treaties.

Faced with this severe situation we deem it necessary to present our guiding principles and basic positions related to the issues of international peace and security, which include, of course, arms control and disarmament.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century the world needs peace, its peoples want cooperation, nations yearn for development and societies seek progress: such is the trend of our

(Mr. Hu, China)

times. The path of multipolarization and economic globalization followed by the world is, however, a tortuous one and, up to the present time, neither of the two major problems faced by today's world, namely, peace and development, has been resolved. The world in which we live is still far from tranquil.

The purposes of China's foreign policy are to safeguard world peace and to promote common development. We have consistently maintained that countries should abide by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the universally recognized basic standards governing international relations and that the cold war mentality manifested in power politics should be discarded once and for all. The affairs of a country should be decided by the Government and people of that country and world affairs should be handled by the Governments and peoples of all countries through consultations on the basis of equality and resolved through multilateral collective efforts. Unilateralism is bound in the end to fail, since it cannot be conducive to world peace and development nor helpful in resolving all the different issues which confront us. Each State has the right to take steps to safeguard its own security interests but none should seek to ensure its own security at the expense of the security of other countries. In the final analysis the only true security is the universal security of all countries.

China firmly adheres to an independent and peaceful foreign policy. Applying the five principles of peaceful coexistence it has conducted friendly exchanges and mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries, in which they treated one another as equals. In this new century the Chinese people and their Government stand ready to join hands with all countries and peoples who yearn for peace, development and progress, in striving for an international environment of lasting peace, in a common endeavour to propel the chariot of history forward towards the glorious goal of the development of humankind.

The following measures are of the utmost importance for arms control and disarmament: safeguarding global strategic stability, strengthening the treaty regimes which have already come into being in the area of arms control and disarmament, ensuring that no weapons or weapon systems are introduced into outer space, promoting the complete prohibition and total elimination of weapons of mass destruction and, in this process, preventing the proliferation of such weapons and their means of delivery. Indispensable for lasting global peace and security, these measures will ensure the security interests of all States without exception.

The ABM Treaty is a cornerstone of strategic stability and the basis for efforts to ensure the reduction of offensive strategic weapons. The international community should urge the parties concerned to make earnest efforts to ensure the effectiveness of that treaty and, with the aim of upholding and abiding by the ABM Treaty, to make further reductions in their offensive strategic weapons. On the issue of the non-proliferation of missiles, we maintain that the international community should further explore the possibility of establishing a more effective global regime to prevent the proliferation of missiles, on the basis of equality and non-discrimination and with the participation of all relevant States.

Our world is both rich and colourful. The diversity of civilizations is an essential feature of human society and also the driving force behind the progress of human civilization. Due

(Mr. Hu, China)

respect should be accorded to the history, culture, social system and mode of development of each individual country. The diversity of the world is a reality that should be recognized. On the one hand the international community needs to set in place a new security concept of multilateral cooperation and collective security and to work together to create a dependable and peaceful international environment of long-term stability and security, with a view to promoting the process of multipolarization in the world. At the same time, countries should step up their economic and technical exchanges and cooperation and gradually transform the world's inequitable and irrational economic order into one that enables everyone to coexist and to benefit from economic globalization.

Regional security and stability will help ensure global peace and development. On 16 June this year, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan announced the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperative Organization. Taking security cooperation as its starting point, this organization serves, through a process of consultation and coordination, to promote full-spectrum cooperation in the fields of economics, trade and culture and in dealing with international and regional affairs. It is based on the concepts of non-alignment and non-confrontation with any other country or regional organization and openness to the outside world. In developing this new type of cooperation the organization takes as its guiding principles mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for the diversity of civilizations and the quest for common development. Based on these principles, a set of new concepts has emerged and started to take form: a new security concept which consists in mutual trust, disarmament and cooperative security; a new type of international relationship which centres on partnership and non-alignment; and a new model of regional cooperation in which all countries, large or small, jointly take the initiative in promoting mutually beneficial cooperation. We believe that this organization, in which the peoples of all its member States have vested their trust, will have a bright future.

Given the present difficult situation in the field of arms control and disarmament, it is essential that we remain steadfast and show solidarity in our endeavours. Only by so doing can we hope to withstand the current that flows against us and bring arms control and disarmament back to their proper course. To this end, the Chinese delegation will join hands with all other countries, with all other sides in this common endeavour.

In the work of the Conference on Disarmament, our most pressing priority is to prevent the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space. An international legal instrument should be concluded on this matter as soon as possible. We advocate the launching at this point, of multilateral negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on this issue and the establishment of an ad hoc committee on PAROS, with a negotiating mandate. China supports the proposal put forward by the delegation of the Russian Federation in document CD/1644 and calls for the earliest possible recommencement of substantive work in the Conference, in accordance with the principle that the concerns of all sides should be addressed in a comprehensive and balanced manner. This work must deal with the issue of nuclear disarmament and the launching of negotiations in FMCT. The Chinese delegation also supports the work developed by the three special coordinators and will make its views known in the course of that work.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of China for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, Ambassador Günther Seibert, who will speak in his capacity as Special Coordinator on the Review of the Agenda of the Conference.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on the assumption of your high office and assure you of the full support of my delegation. I wish you success in smoothly concluding this year's session of the Conference and, we hope, in paving the way for a more productive session next year. May I also thank all your predecessors who have presided over the Conference this year for their untiring efforts to move the Conference forward to substantive work.

I am grateful for the trust which delegations have expressed in mandating me with the difficult task of Special Coordinator for the review of the agenda. Special coordinators on procedural issues can be no substitute for substantive work. With the full support of the delegations, however, they may assist the Conference in overcoming the present stalemate.

The decision of the Conference to appoint special coordinators was nevertheless taken at a late stage of this year's session. In view of the very limited time available to me as Special Coordinator I was neither able, nor could I expect, to succeed where earlier special coordinators had failed. I am therefore not in a position today to report to the Conference any tangible results of my consultations or to point out any emerging consensus on specific aspects of the issue. I do believe, however, that the decisions of the Conference to resume its consultations on reform issues, after not having addressed these issues for the last two and a half years, was an important step and that the discussions we have had on the question of the agenda were useful. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations who replied to the letter that I circulated on 28 June or who actively contributed to the informal consultations on 23 August. I would have needed considerably more time to conduct in-depth consultations to be able to give to the Conference today a comprehensive and precise report on the wide range of positions expressed by delegations on the issue of the agenda. My report is rather a very personal interpretation of the situation, and I ask delegations for their indulgence if they feel that their positions are not appropriately reflected.

I approached the question of the agenda from two angles: function and content. As to the function of the agenda, my consultations confirmed my impression that the agenda of the Conference had undergone a considerable loss of practical relevance. The relationship between the agenda and the actual proceedings of the Conference had become quite tenuous. In earlier years, after the adoption of the Decalogue in 1979, the agenda had evolved in response to the changing preoccupations of delegations. In the course of the 1992 sessions, the issue of transparency in armaments was added as a new item to the agenda. Since then, the agenda had remained essentially static. At the beginning of the 1997 Conference session, after the conclusion of the CTBT negotiations, there were lengthy discussions on the agenda of the

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Conference. These discussions ended in a compromise, whereby the Conference maintained its previous agenda essentially unchanged, accompanied by a statement by the President that it was his understanding, that "if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they could be dealt with within this agenda". Since then, this has been the standard procedure of the Conference at the beginning of the yearly sessions. The presidential statement confers a considerable measure of flexibility to the agenda. This flexibility is further enhanced by an apparent general understanding that any disarmament issue can be subsumed under item 6 of the agenda, entitled "Comprehensive programme of disarmament", if the Conference so decides. No doubt, there is a certain advantage in this considerable, even redundant, flexibility of the agenda. On the other hand, this flexibility would seem to diminish the basic function of the agenda, namely to guide and to structure the subsequent proceedings of the Conference. The agenda, although adopted by consensus, does not reflect a true consensus of the Conference to deal with the items contained in the agenda. The real decision on which items the Conference will deal with and how it will deal with them, is postponed to a further decision on the so-called programme of work. And that decision has eluded us for the last several years in spite of the admirable efforts of so many distinguished and able Presidents.

On this matter there seem to be two major schools of thought. One school welcomes the great flexibility of the present agenda and prefers to concentrate all efforts on the programme of work as top priority. The other school of thought, while also recognizing the priority of starting substantive work in the Conference, continues to attach importance to the agenda and supports efforts to improve its relevance for the Conference. I believe that the discussion we had on this aspect of the agenda was quite useful, but it did not produce clear results on which I could report to you today. In fact, the question of the function of the agenda must also be seen in the context of the working methods of the Conference as a whole. It should possibly, therefore, be more appropriately dealt with in the consultations on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference. The very useful consultations conducted by the distinguished Ambassador of Sri Lanka on this issue have in my view indeed identified a number of issues which are relevant in this context. In particular, the discussions we had on the role of special coordinators as defined in paragraph 5 (d) of Conference decision CD/1036 seem relevant to me in this context. We could re-establish an understanding that at least special coordinators could be appointed regularly on those agenda items where no consensus on subsidiary bodies exists. The relevance of the agenda would certainly be enhanced.

Proposals were also made to revitalize the plenary debate. After all, rule 19 of our rules of procedure states: "the work of the Conference shall be conducted in plenary meetings". In a situation where the Conference has not been able to establish subsidiary bodies for the last three years, it might indeed make sense to make better use of our plenary meetings through more substantive and focused plenary debates, structured along the lines of the agenda, in formal or in informal meetings.

As regards the content of the agenda, discussions were very much along the same lines as reported by earlier special coordinators. As far as the existing items of the agenda are concerned, I detect general agreement on the retention, at least in substance if not in wording,

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of item 1 (Nuclear disarmament), item 3 (Outer space), item 4 (Negative security assurances) and item 7 (Transparency in armaments). Furthermore, there seems to be at present no agreement on rewording any of these items, as proposed by some delegations. A considerable number of delegations have expressed doubts on the continuing relevance of item 2 (Prevention of nuclear war), item 5 (Weapons of mass destruction) and item 6 (Comprehensive programme of disarmament). There does not seem, however, to be one single item on the agenda to which at least one delegation does not continue to attach importance, both in substance and in the present wording. I must, therefore, conclude that at this stage changes in the existing items of the agenda would be quite difficult to achieve and we would require much more intensive consultations than were possible in the limited time available.

The same would seem to apply even more to proposals for changing the general structure of the agenda in the sense of a shorter and more generic agenda. The proposal has been made to reduce the agenda to three main items: weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons, and any other arms control and disarmament initiatives. One could argue that such a generic agenda would more clearly and truthfully reflect the flexibility of the present agenda. It is my impression, however, that most delegations prefer a more gradual and evolutionary approach to the agenda. One major reason for a more cautious approach of this nature is the fact that a great number of delegations feel that the present agenda appropriately reflects the top priority that they attach to the issue of nuclear disarmament in this Conference.

As regards proposals to add new items to the agenda, I feel quite encouraged by the fact that all delegations that participated in the discussions have expressed their willingness to consider the addition of new items to the agenda reflecting current international developments and preoccupations. I feel all the more encouraged as this seems to me, personally, to be the crucial point of our discussions on the agenda. I believe that it is essential for the future of this Conference that it be able to react appropriately to a changing international environment and to emerging new security concerns.

A large number of delegations have proposed the inclusion of a new item called "Conventional disarmament". This is a proposal that has already gained wide support in the past, as noted by previous special coordinators. It should also be noted that this would correspond perfectly to item IV of the Decalogue, entitled "Conventional weapons". It was pointed out that the issue of anti-personnel mines, in particular a possible transfer ban, might more appropriately be dealt with under such a new item. In this context, several delegations have proposed examining possible contributions of the Conference in the field of small arms and light weapons.

Several delegations have expressed strong interest in dealing with the question of missiles in view of the growing international attention given to the subject and the different initiatives recently taken in this field. Many delegations have proposed including FMCT explicitly, either as a new item or as a subitem, in the agenda. It was pointed out, however, that this might raise the question of the relationship between nuclear disarmament and FMCT.

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"Regional disarmament" was also proposed as a new item; it met, however, clear opposition from one delegation. Another proposal, of a more general nature, is to include automatically items recommended by the Untied Nations General Assembly in consensus resolutions. It should be noted that rule 27 of our rules of procedure already states that in adopting its agenda, "the Conference shall take into account the recommendations made to it by the General Assembly".

Although a number of questions or concerns were raised on these proposals to add new items to the agenda, they did not meet with outright refusal, with the exception of that on "regional disarmament". This leads me to the conclusion that further intensified consultations on such proposals to broaden the scope of our agenda would be quite promising.

Mr. President, I am not in a position to make substantive proposals to the Conference at this stage. In the limited time available, I was not able to identify clearly an emerging consensus on any of the specific aspects of the agenda. I believe, however, that the question of the agenda merits more intensified discussions in this Conference. I therefore recommend to the Conference that it continue consultations on the review of the agenda and appoint a special coordinator on this issue at the outset of the 2002 session.

In conclusion, I would like to repeat my thanks to delegations for their contributions to the discussions. I am very grateful for the active interest and encouragement by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, for the work of the special coordinators. I wish to express my warm thanks to him and to Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference and to Mr. Jerzy Zaleski, as well as to the secretariat staff and the interpreters, for the invaluable support I have received.

And may I finally publicly express in this plenary my deep appreciation for the exceptional contributions made by members of my delegation. My respect and gratitude go in particular to Mr. Klaus Achenbach, who has so efficiently supported me in my task as special coordinator and who demonstrated the highest professional and personal qualities throughout his five years in Geneva.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the Special Coordinator for the presentation of his report and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria, Mr. Peter Kolarov, who will present a report on behalf of the Special Coordinator on the Expansion of the Membership of the Conference, Ambassador Petko Draganov.

Mr. KOLAROV (Bulgaria): At the outset, I would like to join the previous speaker in extending my warmest congratulations and appreciation on your assumption on the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you every success. Let me assure you that you may count on my delegation's full cooperation and support. I would also like to extend our gratitude to your distinguished predecessors for their tireless efforts aimed at overcoming the current deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mr. Kolarov, Bulgaria)

As already announced, I will present the report which follows on behalf of Ambassador Petko Draganov, who, for reasons beyond his control, is not in a position to do this personally:

Mr. President, it is my pleasure to address today the Conference on Disarmament in my capacity as Special Coordinator on the Expansion of the Membership of the Conference, thus discharging the mandate contained in decision CD/1646, dated 14 June 2001. I think it is worth recalling that, under paragraph 2 of its rules of procedure, the Conference is under the obligation to review its membership at regular intervals. In fact, over the past decade the Conference on Disarmament has focused on the expansion of its membership on a more or less regular basis, thus trying to find a mutually acceptable solution to the legal as well as moral "dilemma, created by the existing tension between the limited membership of the Conference on the one hand and the universal scope of its task on the other", to quote Ambassador Hofer of Switzerland, who served as Special Coordinator in 1998 and with whom I had the pleasure to begin my consultations.

Indeed, Mr. President, I had a chance to step on the solid ground prepared by my predecessors and, instead of trying anew to develop theoretically the problem of enlargement of the Conference, I could rather concentrate on the respective national positions, trying to compare them so as to report to you on a possible consensus, or at least, on the prevailing mood in the Conference on the issue. Accordingly - and you have certainly noticed that - the options listed in the questionnaire, circulated in mid-July to all the Conference's member States, namely, maintaining the status quo, limited expansion, expansion by all 22 countries which have applied for membership and qualified universality (i.e., the right to application by all member States of the United Nations and the specialized agencies), were not the product of my imagination. They had already been discussed in the past when a limited expansion of the Conference's membership was agreed upon. Nevertheless, I considered that such a pragmatic approach would be helpful for clarifying the respective national positions on a new expansion of this important body and would prepare the factual basis required for further negotiations.

In discharging my term of service during the past month, I had bilateral consultations with or received replies from almost half of the Conference's member States. I consider these consultations as being very helpful as they have provided me with a first-hand sense of our aspirations as well as an idea of which the most sensitive issues are. The preliminary results of this first round have shown an overwhelming support for a considerable expansion of the membership of the Conference. In fact, more than two thirds of the delegations that expressed their position are favourable to the qualified universality option or the enlargement of the Conference by the 22 applicant States, the latter often being considered as an interim step towards universal membership.

In general, most of the delegations that expressed their support for such an enlargement argue that, in the current impasse affecting the Conference on Disarmament, maintaining the system of limited membership would be a mistake and would perpetuate a crisis of the Conference's very legitimacy. A considerable enlargement without preconditions or the

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qualified universality options would democratize the Conference and would pave the way for future disarmament negotiations inside the Conference rather than in ad hoc forums outside the Conference framework. Along the same lines and for obvious reasons, most of the above-mentioned delegations reject practically any selection criteria or preconditions for membership. Of course, there are also opponents to these two options. Several delegations have expressed doubt with regard to the utility of increasing considerably the membership. Common to those member States is the argument that the last 1999 expansion did not help overcome the current deadlock.

Most of the remaining delegations seem to be favourable to a limited expansion by anything from 5 to 15 or more new members, carried out in accordance with established objective criteria, such as date of application and balanced regional representation. Other proposed criteria include interest and capacity to participate in the work of the Conference, contribution to the cause of disarmament, and implementation of the international instruments in the disarmament field. As in the past, this option seems to be feasible, but a very complicated one as - and this was pointed out by most of its opponents - it implies the selection of a number of agreed criteria for membership. In fact, past experience has shown that this option requires not the application of a set of "objective" criteria for expansion, but a temporary solution - albeit one that is acceptable to all the Conference's member States - of a further exclusion of some of the applicant countries.

It is also clear that a discussion on membership criteria may lead to an indefinite delay as it is almost impossible to accommodate all the divergent views on how to identify the ideal number of participants, taking into account the concept of regional balance (which, by the way, is considered by many as a typical example of cold war thinking), the date of application, and such considerations as the activeness, interest, contribution, etc., of applicants, as well as endeavouring at the same time to satisfy competing political, regional geo-strategic and other claims.

Finally, the issue of enlargement remains sensitive for a few countries that are still not fully persuaded of the utility of a new expansion of the Conference, and which point out that the previous enlargement did not increase its effectiveness. As stressed by many delegations, however, there is no proof of any direct correlation between the number of members negotiating and the ability to perform. On the contrary, other forums have proved to be able to negotiate quite efficiently, notwithstanding the number of their members. Against this background, I have noticed a broad support for the thesis that a lack of sufficient political will, and not increased membership, is the main reason for the current impasse in the Conference on Disarmament.

Taking into account the time restraints, and bearing in mind the sensitiveness of the issue, I would sum up my observations as follows:

First, as already stated, under the rules of procedure, the membership of the Conference on Disarmament is to be reviewed at regular intervals. During my consultations no one

(Mr. Kolarov, Bulgaria)

challenged this approach. I observed readiness and active support in my search for a mutually acceptable solution and I am very grateful for the cooperation and the understanding I received from all the Conference's member States in discharging my duties.

Second, there is a broad majority feeling in favour of a new considerable expansion of the Conference on Disarmament. In fact, I noticed a strong determination among many delegations to reach a durable, and even a definitive solution, to the problem of the Conference's membership by adopting the appropriate option.

Third, even if most delegations showed flexibility and readiness to consult on the issue, at this stage there is still no consensus on any of the four options, and I am still not in a position to propose a mutually agreed position tolerable to all member States. The expansion of the Conference on Disarmament is a dynamic process, which, however, is also a reflection of the international security environment. This exercise will require further hard work and considerable negotiating skills in search of a delicate balance between the respective national interests and our common responsibilities as the sole negotiating body with a universal task in the field of international security and disarmament.

Fourth, as already stated, owing to the limited time available as well as for other reasons beyond my control, I have to confess that I was not in a position to accomplish fully my responsibilities in the way I consider appropriate. Consequently, this should be regarded only as an interim report, and I would strongly recommend the continuation of this important exercise through the reappointment at the beginning of the 2002 session of the Conference of a special coordinator on the expansion of the membership of the CD. It goes without saying, Mr. President, that I am ready to provide my successor with the output of my experience.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like to express my gratitude to all the delegations for their valuable support. My gratitude goes also to Mr. Vladimir Petrovski, the Secretary-General of the Conference, and to his deputy, Mr. Enrique Román-Morey, as well as to Mr. Jerzy Zaleski, who provided me with excellent assistance in my work as special coordinator.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Bulgaria for presenting the report of the Special Coordinator on the Expansion of the Membership of the Conference and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. MAIOLINI (Italy): I would like to say a few words and not in a very formal way. Once Chateaubriand said, "Un orientaliste, c'est un homme qui a voyagé beaucoup." In this assembly, a man of disarmament is a man who thinks and proposes a lot. That is why I have to say that I am pleased that this morning we have heard three thoughtful statements. And I am also pleased that all three have had the effect of advocating continuation of the exercise which we initiated a few weeks ago. All three statements have interesting points and I think they deserve a great deal of attention.

(Mr. Maiolini, Italy)

The statements of the two Special Coordinators show us that the matters that have been dealt with, of course, have been dealt with by others in the past, but this does not mean that those in the past exhausted the issues that were being considered. So, I would like to express to the two Special Coordinators my warmest compliments and congratulations and, as far as my delegation is concerned, we shall do our utmost to deepen the consideration and the examination of what they have proposed and explained to us today.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

That appears not to be the case. Accordingly, this concludes our business for today.

As Thursday, 6 September 2001, is an official holiday and the Palais des Nations is closed, the next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 4 September 2001, at 10 a.m., and it will be followed by an informal plenary meeting during which we will start consideration of the draft annual report of the Conference on Disarmament.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.886
4 September 2001

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 4 September, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Roberto Betancourt Ruales (Ecuador)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 886th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I should like at the outset, on behalf of the Conference, to extend a warm welcome to the participants in the 2001 United Nations Disarmament Fellowship and Training Programme who are observing the proceedings of this plenary. I am sure they will benefit from exposure to our forum, and especially from the presentations that will be made to them on various aspects of our work. I wish them a fruitful stay in Geneva.

I should also like to remind you that, immediately following this plenary meeting, we shall hold an informal plenary to start consideration of our draft annual report to the United Nations General Assembly, which is contained in document CD/WP.520.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representative of the United States of America, Ambassador Robert Grey, and the representative of India, Ambassador Rakesh Sood.

I now give the floor to the representative of the United States, Ambassador Robert Grey.

Mr. GREY (United States of America): Since this is the first time I shall be speaking during your presidency, let me congratulate you upon your assumption of the office and on the very effective way you are carrying out your duties.

Mr. President, the United States delegation listened with great attention to the statement delivered on 30 August by the distinguished representative of the People's Republic of China. In that statement, Ambassador Hu attached great importance to preserving, protecting, and defending the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems that representatives of the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics signed in Moscow on 26 May 1972 - as if that treaty were holy writ. In contrast, the United States will not presume to analyse the various bilateral treaties that China concluded during the decade of the 1970s. Nor shall we offer China our advice on preserving, protecting, and defending any of those bilateral treaties that it concluded two to three decades ago.

But Mr. President, in diplomacy, as in real life, things that do not continue to evolve and grow ultimately are doomed to decline and die.

The ABM Treaty, as it stands, really has become a relic. In terms of its real meaning, it bespoke a balance of terror, a cold-war calculation that the physical security and ultimate fate of hundreds of millions of human beings had to be held hostage to the prospect of instant annihilation. That intense irony, that palpable contradiction, may have been necessary at that time. It is not necessary now. It has been 10 years since the cold war ended.

(Mr. Grey, United States of America)

The United States and the Russian Federation need to work out a new security framework. President Bush and President Putin have launched this process, and we hope that our ongoing dialogue will be fruitful.

Some people may find it comfortable to live in the past. We Americans choose to embrace the future.

For almost 30 years, offensive missiles were thought to be effectively irresistible. The total and exclusive reliance on "mutual assured destruction" was indeed MAD, as implied by the abbreviation we concocted then and still use now.

We realize that the principle of nuclear deterrence will remain important for strategic stability for many years to come. There can be no doubt about that. But we need to move beyond MAD and continue to make substantial reductions in the number of offensive nuclear weapons.

Yesterday's doctrines will not bring us the tomorrow to which we and the other four nuclear-weapons States committed ourselves in article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty - a world free from nuclear weapons.

The United States fully understands that missile defence has significant implications for China and for many other members of the international community. But we find it difficult to understand how defensive measures can be considered threatening. That is upside down and amounts to a contradiction. After all, defensive measures defend. It is offensive arms that threaten.

And, let us not forget: The United States is seeking to reduce the number of offensive nuclear weapons, not maintain them at present levels.

To get a real grasp of these questions, certain paradoxes have to be understood and put in proper context. Article 51 of the United Nations Charter speaks of the inherent right of self-defence. But we have to be quite clear, for the United Nations Charter does not accord the right of self-defence. On the contrary, the Charter recognizes the right of self-defence, saying that this right is inherent and that nothing in the Charter shall impair it.

The conclusion ought to be obvious, but I shall state it anyway: The United States and its allies have an inherent right to adopt appropriate methods of defence. No one has the standing to deny this, nor can anyone else take that right away.

The inherent right of self-defence is closely associated with two fundamental principles that are enshrined in Articles 1 and 2 of the Charter. In brief, these two principles are the peaceful settlement of disputes and the non-use of force. If a nation is unwilling to set aside the possible use of force, if that same nation wants to exert pressure by holding open the possibility that it may seek to resolve a dispute by force of arms, then it may indeed have concerns about possible measures of self-defence that others may be able to employ.

(Mr. Grey, United States of America)

But the solution to all this is not to try to curtail the right of others to defend themselves if need be. No, the solution is to agree once and for all that the dispute in question will be resolved by peaceful means, and that other methods will not even be considered.

The United States has no illusion that its plans for missile defence would shield the United States, or its allies and friends, from all possible attacks involving ballistic missiles. We fully understand that these plans would be ineffective in the event of an attack involving large numbers of missiles that are technically advanced. Nevertheless, the United States Government believes that the various plans which we are considering would be constructive and helpful under certain circumstances about which we are especially concerned.

The emotional and political overtones of this debate that has gripped so many of our colleagues and counterparts throughout the world tend to imply that missile defence is something profoundly new, something rather strange. Not so. Missile defence exits and has existed for many years.

Those of us who watched hour upon hour of CNN broadcasts during the Gulf war remember that Patriot missiles were shooting down Scud missiles over Israel and Saudi Arabia. Not all the Patriots worked properly, which is to say that some of the Scuds got through and caused significant damage - yet another reason for further research.

The military forces of many countries, including those of the United States, have long had the capacity to intercept and destroy short-range and medium-range missiles in a battlefield environment. Broader capabilities do not exist now, but we believe it will be possible to develop missile defence systems that would provide substantial protection to an entire region or theatre. For example, we have taken note of the general concepts that Russia put forward concerning a missile defence system for the European region.

I have repeatedly stated here that United States plans for missile defence are not aimed at Russia, nor at China. No, we are pursuing these goals and objectives for other reasons that we have often explained.

The United States would like to build affirmative and forward-looking relations with Russia and China on political, economic, and cultural levels. The issue of missile defence should not stand in the way, an in practice we do not believe that it does.

The United States likewise does not believe that questions of missile defence or the ABM Treaty provide a valid or even a plausible reason for obstructing negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Missile defence, as such, is not on the agenda of the Conference. Instead, political concerns about missile defence lead to procedural manoeuvres related to potential work on outer space. This has happened here in Geneva, even though questions related to outer space are broad, complex, and at a very preliminary stage in the deliberations of the international community.

(Mr. Grey, United States of America)

Proposals to negotiate a new outer space treaty cannot possibly bear fruit unless and until there is a convincing demonstration that collective security and mutual restraint in outer space can best be achieved by seeking to negotiate some new legal instrument. Such a conclusion would not even be plausible unless and until there were convincing reasons to believe that possible prohibitions or restrictions to be embedded in some new treaty would actually prove effective in practice. That, in turn, would have to be based on the conviction that there would be reliable and efficient ways to verify compliance with new obligations.

Mr. President, the United States continues to have profound doubts that discussion in any ad hoc committee with an exploratory mandate on outer space really would lead to the conclusions I have just summarized. On the other hand, we are absolutely certain about one point: such conclusions cannot possibly be reached while the Conference on Disarmament remains deadlocked and inactive.

In the context of active and ongoing negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, the United States is prepared to agree to an overall work programme that calls for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament and another ad hoc committee that would conduct exploratory discussions on outer space issues.

This net approach is the fundamental premise of the proposals that Brazilian Ambassador Amorim put forward on 24 August 2000, in CD/1624, while he was serving as President to the Conference. We deeply regret that China is one of a very small number of member States that are not prepared to go forward on this basis. We once again urge these countries to reconsider, so that the Conference on Disarmament can get back to work and can fulfil the well-justified expectations of the international community.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of the United States for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of India, Ambassador Rakesh Sood.

Mr. SOOD (India): Mr. President, please accept my delegations compliments on your assumption of the presidency and for the manner in which you are conducting the work of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to place on record our appreciation for the good work done by your predecessors, who spared no efforts in attempting to carry the work of this Conference forward. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Ambassador Anne Anderson of Ireland and Ambassador Petko Draganov of Bulgaria, who have already left Geneva, as well as to Ambassador Vasily Sidorov of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Günther Seibert of Germany, Ambassador Ian Soutar of the United Kingdom and Ambassador Robert Grey of the United States of America, who will be leaving Geneva shortly. We will remember all of them for their valuable contributions, bringing to bear their vast and varied experiences on the work of this Conference. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Ambassador Gustavo Albin of Mexico, Ambassador Toufik Saloum of Syria and Ambassador Toufiq Ali of Bangladesh, who have joined us recently in our efforts to breathe life into this Conference

(Mr. Sood, India)

Despite all these collective efforts, however, we are ending another year without having undertaken any substantive work because of our inability to agree on a programme of work. All that we have to show is modest activity related to procedural matters. This is not the first time that my delegation has expressed disappointment over the state of affairs of our Conference. Nor is mine the only delegation to do so. What is worrying is that we still do not see positive signs on the horizon to dispel our growing collective pessimism. Instead, developments, as in the case of the BWC Protocol, point to tendencies that may threaten the very concept of multilateral disarmament negotiations.

The closest we have come in recent times to an agreement on a programme of work was a year ago, when the innovative work of numerous presidents culminated in the Amorim proposal of CD/1624. India was willing then and is still prepared to accept the contents of that document as a compromise that will enable us to move forward. It is not our ideal option. We would have preferred a more ambitious mandate on the priority issue of nuclear disarmament. But we recognize that, given the current international situation, this would be unrealistic, while anything less than that contained in CD/1624 would be unacceptable. That is why the Amorim proposal was widely perceived as bringing us tantalizingly close to an agreement. Regrettably, a year later, the international community has not found it feasible to adopt a decision on the basis of this compromise. Instead, all we did this year was to put substantive work on the back burner and stir the pot of reforms a little so that we do not appear to be idle.

Specifically, in agenda item 1, entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", our preferred position is the Group of 21 proposal contained in document CD/1570 for establishing an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament with a mandate, submitted by the Group, contained in document CD/1571 "to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapon convention". We did, however, express our willingness to accept the compromise Amorim proposal, namely, as stated by the proposal, "to deal with nuclear disarmament" with the aim of at least beginning work on the substantive aspects of agenda item 1. Simultaneously, India reiterated its support for the establishment of an ad hoc committee to negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material.

India also supports the position taken by the Group of 21 on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We hope that further consultations yield agreement on a mandate that will at least enable us to begin work on substantive aspects of this agenda item, in response to the aspirations of the international community to ensure the non-weaponization of outer space. Our approach reflects the importance we attached to the Conference on Disarmament. Other delegations, too, profess a similar sentiment.

Why then are we in this predicament today? Is the Conference on Disarmament in a state of suspended animation because there is no more need to pursue security, which is described as "an inseparable element of peace, one of the most profound aspirations of humanity"? Have we given up seeking security "through a gradual but effective process of disarmament"? Have

(Mr. Sood, India)

the "efforts of States to end the arms race" borne fruit? The answers to all of these questions are - no, no and no. Still, those are the very issues invoked in the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, when the General Assembly asserted the "continuing requirement for a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of limited size taking decisions on the basis of consensus". In short, the priorities and programme of action contained in the final document have not become irrelevant with passage of time or with "revolutions in military affairs".

The current impasse in efforts to establish the Conference's programme of work is caused by the inflexible positions of a few delegations that have prevented agreement from being reached on the two outstanding issues to which I have referred - nuclear disarmament and outer space. This regrettable situation has made us turn our attention to the work of the three special coordinators dealing with procedural matters. Let me therefore convey the views of my delegation on the subject being addressed by the special coordinators.

In considering the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, one issue often discussed is the possibility of altering the rule of consensus. As mentioned already, the Conference on Disarmament was established in its present form by the General Assembly at the first special session on disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum for "taking decisions on the basis of consensus". Since its establishment, the Conference has generally conducted its work by consensus, which has served it well. In 1996, some delegations found the consensus rule inconvenient and bypassed the Conference on Disarmament. In hindsight, I would venture to think that there is little interest in repeating that unedifying exercise. Consensus is a critical necessity because it ensures that every member State's vital and legitimate security interests will be protected. Diluting this rule by reinterpreting it or redefining it will have an adverse impact on the confidence which the States must have in this body, and thereby on its effective functioning.

The rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament have not been amended often as these have generally stood the test of time. We have resumed the work of the Conference every year beginning with the approval of its agenda and its programme of work. In most years, when there was requisite political will, the agenda and the programme of work were approved early on, enabling us to begin substantive work. Difficulties have arisen in recent years, which are due not to "procedures" but to the fact that priorities and the programme of action contained in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament are not being implemented and are under pressure to be revised.

The group system of the Conference on Disarmament is based on political affinities and will continue until better alternatives emerge. Issue-based grouping could be explored and nothing in the rules of procedure prevents such a group making its views known. Groupings evolve on the basis of political realities and could be formalized as these emerge in response to felt needs.

The existing rules of procedure do provide the Conference with a considerable variety of mechanisms for conducting its work by way of plenary meetings, informal meetings - with or

(Mr. Sood, India)

without experts, and "under any additional arrangements agreed by the Conference". There is also provision to "establish subsidiary bodies, such as ad hoc committees, working groups, technical groups or groups of governmental experts". Given such flexibility in the choice of mechanisms, the rules of procedure do not stand in the way of the generous and creative use of any such mechanism, as long as there is reasonable expectation on the part of the members that it could serve some productive purpose.

In discussing the review of the agenda, the Special coordinator has focused on the role of the agenda and the content of the agenda. As the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating forum, inclusion of an item in its annual agenda implies that the international community seeks negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for global agreements on that item. The road map is clear. We have negotiated comprehensive, universal and non-discriminatory multilateral treaties dealing with two categories of weapons of mass destruction: biological weapons and chemical weapons. We need to adopt a similar approach to deal with nuclear weapons. Global elimination of nuclear weapons remains the highest priority for negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. This reflects the priorities established in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, based on which the "Decalogue" was adopted by the Conference on Disarmament in 1979. It is on this basis that the Conference adopted a mandate for an ad hoc committee on FMCT, an item which does not find mention on the agenda, except as part of item 1 - "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". Therefore, the problem is not with the content of the agenda but its implementation.

The question of expansion of the membership of the Conference is one that needs a comprehensive approach. The Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament stated that it was deeply aware of the continuing requirement for a single disarmament negotiating forum of limited size, taking decisions on the basis of consensus. The Final Document also recognized the need for membership to be reviewed at regular intervals.

India has consistently held the view that there needs to be a balance between the criteria of membership of this Conference and its effectiveness as a negotiating forum. The representative nature of the forum has to be kept in mind, and also the need for universal adherence to the legal instruments negotiated by it; hence, the importance of striking a right balance among the different aspects and taking a comprehensive view rather than a country-specific approach. It is heartening to see the interest expressed by many countries in joining the Conference on Disarmament but at this moment our priority, including for the candidate countries, is to reactivate the Conference so that negotiations get under way

I have invoked the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session often in my statement only to demonstrate that the document that has shaped the purpose and the working of this Conference for 23 years still retains its validity in present times, if we are committed to multilateralism. Tinkering with procedural matters will not get us far in resolving the current impasse. The international disarmament agenda is in a state of flux generated by certain unilateral decisions, some bilateral adjustments and a few club-based pluralistic arrangements,

(Mr. Sood, India)

which threaten the very edifice of multilateral negotiation process that the Conference on Disarmament stands for. We have also seen during the year a renewal of attempts to take issues away from the Conference on Disarmament, where they rightly belong, to other forums on the ground that these issues are too important to be ignored. These developments do not bode well for the Conference's future. In our view, the Conference on Disarmament is a precious resource because, even in its current situation, it offers more space than any other forum for official multilateral dialogue on issues of concern. Yet, questions are raised - for example, is the Conference on Disarmament a creature of the international security environment that awakes from its enforced hibernation only when there is adequate change in that environment? If so, then why the anxiety at being forced to remain in the passive default mode for five years now? Or is the international security situation in this post-post-cold-war phase mutating into a different ball game. Does it require a different set of rules and a different playing field? And, finally, is it not ironical that, when we accept the inevitability of the tide of globalization, the role of multilateralism in disarmament seems under threat?

In conclusion, Mr. President, let me hark back to item 2 of the agenda of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which reads "Minute of silent prayer or meditation". As we reflect on these questions, perhaps it is time for us in the Conference on Disarmament to return to that agenda item, in order to impart value to this forum, to which we all attach great importance.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of India for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? As this appears not to be the case, that concludes our business for today. As I mentioned to you earlier, we will convene in an informal plenary meeting in 10 minutes' time, to start consideration of the draft annual report. I would like to remind delegations that informal plenary meetings are open only to member States and observer States of the Conference.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 11 September 2001, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.887
11 September 2001

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on
Tuesday, 11 September 2001, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Roberto Betancourt Ruales (Ecuador)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 887th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. This will be an unusually extended meeting, since I have on my list of speakers for today the following representatives: Chile, Peru, Belgium, Argentina, Algeria, Norway, Canada, Mexico and the United Kingdom.

Before giving them the floor, however, I would like to remind you that, immediately following this plenary meeting, we shall hold an informal plenary to continue consideration of the draft annual report to the United Nations General Assembly.

I now give the floor to the representative of Chile, Minister Counsellor Alfredo Labbé, who will make his statement on behalf of the Ambassador, Mr. Juan Enrique Vega.

Mr. LABBE (Chile) (translated from Spanish): Thank you, Mr. President. I am pleased to take the floor at this meeting, so close to the end of the Conference's work for this year, to tell the member States and the observers that yesterday, Monday, 10 September, Chile deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations the instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, also known as the Ottawa Convention. Chile has thus completed the process which, as everybody knows, is so lengthy and arduous of the domestic legal fine-tuning of an instrument of particular importance to Latin America and the world at large.

As we have said more than once before, the tensions among neighbours in our subregion in the 1970s and 1980s meant that Chile sowed thousands upon thousands of mines along its frontiers and those munitions were regarded as a decisive factor in the defence of our country. When today we look back on those decisions and the logic which underpinned them, we cannot but welcome the radical change brought about in South America with the restoration of democracy, which, in turn, has changed the security landscape in our hemisphere.

The democratic Governments in Latin America have shown themselves capable of resolving virtually all the boundary disputes that gave rise not only to tensions between and among neighbours but also, sadly, to armed conflicts and arms races that posed additional obstacles to the development of our region and to our maturity as committed, responsible players in the international community.

Thus, before highlighting our ratification, I wish to emphasize that we in Chile and our brothers in Latin America have abandoned this mindset of confrontation, the doctrine of the assumptions of dispute and conflict, that brought my country to lay the largest number of mines in South America.

In the light of the foregoing it must be said that, for Chile, ratifying this Convention was an enormous challenge. As a State which has never had, nor plans to have, weapons of mass destruction, participation in the debate on some issues and items on the disarmament agenda has been conducted from the standpoint of principle. Compliance with the Ottawa Convention, on the other hand, represents for us a real, practical challenge.

(Mr. Labbé, Chile)

To clear and destroy the vast quantity of mines that we sowed in the past has meant, first, exorcizing the geopolitical demons that prompted us to sow them in the first place. Henceforward, Chile will need economic resources no less vast in order to carry out the enormous physical task involved. We shall do what we can and we hope that, pursuant to article 6 of the Ottawa Convention, our friends will help us.

The simple ceremony to mark the deposit of our instrument of ratification was attended by our special guests, the Permanent Representatives of Canada and Norway to the United Nations at New York. In this way Chile wished to pay tribute and to acknowledge the two particularly friendly States whose political initiative and diplomatic skills had made the Ottawa Convention possible. We worked with them in the framework of the human security network, which also included Austria, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Slovenia, South Africa and observers Switzerland and Thailand, so as to place people, human beings of flesh and blood, at the very centre of multilateral action.

The Ottawa Convention can be held up as an alternative example of what is possible in terms of international security and disarmament when the political will is there. This instrument shows that medium-sized and small States can indeed generate the necessary critical mass to produce constructive results which positively affect the lives of millions of human beings. May this example serve to help us exorcize those forces that keep the Disarmament Conference paralysed.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Chile for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Peru, Ambassador Jorge Voto-Bernales.

Mr. VOTO-BERNALES (Peru) (translated from Spanish): Thank you, Mr. President. Since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, may I convey my delegation's sincere appreciation for the way in which you have conducted the work of the Disarmament Conference, which is now drawing to the end of its 2001 session.

As everyone knows, my country is totally committed to the principles and purposes of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Similarly, we are actively involved in the intersessional programme of work of the Convention, where Peru holds the joint chairmanship of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance and Related Technologies.

In this connection, I am pleased to announce that, on Thursday, 13 September, Peru will have completed the destruction of the 321,368 anti-personnel mines that constituted the Peruvian arsenal of this type of weapon. The elimination of the last batch of 27,025 anti-personnel mines will take place the day after tomorrow.

The elimination of anti-personnel mines has been carried out in a continuous and transparent fashion over the last year. The operations to destroy the stockpiles of anti-personnel

(Mr. Voto-Bernales, Peru)

mines have been supported and verified by representatives of the international community, the United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and civil society. In this way, Peru will have fully complied with article 4 of the Ottawa Convention some one-and-a-half years before the four-year deadline.

My delegation is grateful to the members of the international community who have supported Peru in this endeavour. I am pleased to tell you that, with regard to its mine clearance obligations under the Convention, Peru has continued its efforts, as has Ecuador, to destroy as quickly as possible all existing anti-personnel mines in the frontier region shared by the two countries and to provide care for and ensure the social and economic integration of the victims of such weapons.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Peru, Ambassador Bernales, for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium, Ambassador Jean Lint.

Mr. LINT (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, as Co-Chair of the Standing Committee of Experts on the General Status and Operation of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, I would like to thank my colleagues from Chile and Peru for their statements.

I note with great satisfaction the announcement of ratification by Chile, which, in six months, will become the one hundred and twentieth State party to the Convention. Chile is thus the thirty-fifth member State of the Conference on Disarmament to ratify or accede to the Convention. Six other members have signed but not yet ratified it; 25 member States of the Conference remain outside the Convention. This ratification, as my Chilean colleague has said, is of particular importance in the regional context of South America and also at the global level.

Since the Second Meeting of States Parties in Geneva in September 2000, five member States of the Conference have ratified the Convention, namely, Bangladesh, Chile, Colombia, Kenya and Romania, and I would like here to commend them for so doing. Two other members of the Conference - Algeria and Cameroon - have indicated they will soon deposit their instruments of ratification. It is my hope that Ethiopia will soon ratify as well, in view of Eritrea's accession to the Convention on 27 August 2001. Turkey has announced here in these halls that it will soon accede to the Convention, on the same date that it is ratified by Greece. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has stated that all the necessary steps have been taken for its accession in the near future.

Since the last meeting of the States parties, in Geneva, member States of the Conference on Disarmament have taken important steps to implement the Convention in full. Thus, Bulgaria, Malaysia, Slovakia, Spain and Zimbabwe have destroyed their stockpiles of anti-personnel landmines in compliance with article 4 of the Convention. They are among the 28 States which have completely destroyed their stockpiles. Nineteen other States are in the

(Mr. Lint, Belgium)

process of destroying their stockpiles and I would like to thank Peru for the information which it has just provided. Bulgaria, Malaysia and Zimbabwe have passed national legislation, including criminal penalties, in fulfilment of their obligations under article 9 of the Convention. Argentina, Brazil and Tunisia have submitted their first transparency report, as required by article 7 of the Convention.

To date, 120 States have ratified or acceded to the Convention and 141 States have either signed, ratified or acceded to it. Clearly, an international standard has been created, that is, the total prohibition of the production, stockpiling, use and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, and this standard is one that cannot be circumvented even by the non-signatory States. Indeed, since the entry into force of the Treaty, the trade in anti-personnel landmines has virtually ceased and production of these mines has been substantially reduced. There are no more than 14 producers left in the world.

Similarly, the number of victims in the worst affected countries has been steadily falling and, at the world level, increased financial assistance is being given each year by both signatory and non-signatory States for the purposes of mine clearance, assistance to victims and raising awareness of the dangers of mines. At the same time, much remains to be done and the entire international community must be involved.

Next week, the Third Meeting of States Parties will be held in Managua, Nicaragua. The presence of the largest number of States parties, signatories and non-signatories, will be of great importance in ensuring the success of the Convention. I invite all of you to attend that event, which will be held at the midway point to the Review Conference scheduled for 2004.

Tomorrow, the third annual report of the Landmine Monitor network will be officially presented at the global level by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). The Landmine Monitor has become an essential reference document on the status of the Convention and the global situation as regards anti-personnel landmines.

Mr. President, universality is one of the fundamental objectives of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Landmines and, in this context, I encourage the 52 States which have not signed the Convention to accede to it as soon as possible. It is also important, however, that the Convention be implemented in full to rid the world of this inhuman weapon. I call upon all States, whether they be States parties, signatories or non-signatories, to desist from the use of anti-personnel landmines, in view of their impact on the lives of innocent civilians.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the Ambassador of Belgium for his important statement and also for his kind words addressed to the Chair.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Argentina, Ambassador Horacio Solari.

Mr. SOLARI (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, at the outset may I convey to you our most sincere congratulations on the manner in which you are conducting the work of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you every success as President.

Argentina fully subscribes to the purposes and thinking underlying the Ottawa Convention. It aspires to the goal of prohibiting anti-personnel landmines, since this is consistent with Argentine disarmament and arms limitation policy. This will enable us to restrict one type of weapon characterized by the particularly cruel and inhuman effects for its victims and by the indiscriminate nature of its consequences.

This aspiration of my country, which we share with the international community, is manifested in the conviction that we can make our region a mine-free zone and that this is an objective that can indeed be attained. The Declaration of MERCOSUR Bolivia and Chile, signed by the respective delegations of those countries on 30 July 1998, proclaims the region as a zone of peace, free of anti-personnel mines, and seeks to extend this status to the entire hemisphere in accordance with OAS resolutions on the subject.

Argentina views the Third Meeting of States Parties, to be held in Managua, Nicaragua, from 18 to 21 September this year, as a decisive step forward in the process leading to the effective implementation of the provisions, principles and purposes of the Convention, with a view to achieving humanitarian mine clearance and prohibiting such weapons throughout the world. The Managua meeting will be an excellent opportunity for sharing regional experience with regard to the destruction of existing stocks in the Americas and providing the technical and technological capacity and trained personnel in the region to accomplish this process.

Mr. President, we must remember that the entry into force of the Convention has given the international community a valuable legal instrument that is essential for strengthening the principles of humanitarian international law. The importance of the principles and purposes laid down in that instrument is reflected in the wide accession of a considerable number of countries, all of them committed to putting an end to the suffering and death caused by anti-personnel mines.

In this context, we express our full satisfaction with and welcome the recent ratification by the Republic of Chile of the Ottawa Convention, about which we have just heard, reflecting yet again the commitment to the process leading to the final elimination of anti-personnel mines from the region.

The growing number of ratifications of this instrument demonstrates that, far from compromising the security of States, the Ottawa Convention is a measure which fosters trust and confidence-building among countries. This has been made clear by the express undertaking given by the countries of the Rio Group before the Oslo meeting to be bound by its provisions and to see these as a guarantee of security for the Latin American region. We therefore support the interesting remarks made in this context by Chile.

(Mr. Solari, Argentina)

It is therefore essential that those countries which have still not signed the Convention do so as soon as possible so as to facilitate coordinated action by the international community to mitigate the indiscriminate consequences of the use of such weapons.

Argentina ratified this Convention on 14 September 1999 and has deposited its instrument of ratification and submitted the report required by article 7 of the Convention. Argentina's commitment to the principles and purposes enshrined in the Ottawa Convention is also reflected in the contribution that it makes to international cooperation in the area of humanitarian mine clearance.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Argentina, Ambassador Horacio Solari, for his important statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Norway, Counsellor Langeland.

Mr. LANGELAND (Norway): Mr. President, since this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor during your presidency, allow me to express our appreciation of the way you are guiding our deliberations.

I would also like to thank previous speakers for informing the Conference on Disarmament about the Third Meeting of the State Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, as well as progress in implementing and universalizing the Convention.

Norway attaches great importance to this Convention, which was negotiated in Oslo four years ago. Another illustration of our commitment to this Convention is the fact that Ambassador Kongstad of Norway was elected as President at the Second Meeting of State Parties and currently chairs the Coordination Committee. The main priority of the Norwegian presidency has been consolidation of the Ottawa process and full implementation of the various provisions under the Convention. To this end we maintain our commitment to allocate US$ 120 million to mine action over a five-year period.

Since the Convention entered into force more than two years ago, we have seen important progress. As Ambassador Lint has said, the universalization of the Convention is proceeding well. But 52 countries have neither signed nor ratified the Convention, and we fully agree with Ambassador Lint in encouraging these 52 countries to accede to the Treaty.

Other positive developments are: reduced use of anti-personnel mines, a dramatic drop in production, an almost complete halt in the trade and transfer of anti-personnel mines, increased destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, increased funding for humanitarian mine action, including victim assistance, and most important, we are now seeing a significant decline in the number of new mine victims.

(Mr. Langeland, Norway)

This clearly illustrates that the Mine Ban Convention is becoming an international norm whose effect goes beyond the membership of the Convention. Despite such progress, however, we still face important challenges. There are strong indications of new use of anti-personnel mines in several conflicts. Despite an encouraging decrease in new mine victims, there are still thousands of new casualties from anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordinance (UXO). Thus, we are still facing a humanitarian emergency.

The Convention has achieved much in a short period of time, but much remains to be done.

At the upcoming Meeting of States Parties in Managua, we aim for a further strengthening of the Convention, through renewed commitment to its implementation. It is therefore vital to keep up the momentum for victim assistance, mine clearance, stockpile destruction and the general operation of the Convention, such as compliance. We also look forward to a positive decision with respect to improved support functions for the Convention.

The Ottawa process represents a unique partnership between mine-affected and other countries, between North and South, and between Governments and non-governmental organizations. The process continues to be a constructive, cooperative undertaking that positively supports a multilateral approach.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Norway, Counsellor Langeland, for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Canada, Ambassador Christopher Westdal.

Mr. WESTDAL (Canada): I hasten to use this, my first chance, to congratulate you on your conduct of the presidency. You have been dealt a pretty hopeless hand, of course, but you are playing it well, with characteristic Ecuadorian poise and panache.

I want to begin by joining those who have welcomed Chile's important ratification of the Ottawa Convention. We are heartened by the growing number of countries committed to the elimination of landmines.

Mr. President, I also join those welcoming the forthcoming release of the 2001 edition of the Landmine Monitor report. Canada has been contributing to the Landmine Monitor for several years. We congratulate ICBL for this comprehensive annual report, which promotes effective implementation and full compliance with the Convention. It is a credible, independent source of information, complementing the Convention's State reporting requirements.

Last year's report gave us lots of good news. We have been encouraged by the dramatic drop in the production of anti-personnel mines, by a major decline in the use of these weapons in

(Mr. Westdal, Canada)

recent years, despite some unfortunate exceptions, and by an almost complete halt to their international trade. Millions of mines have been destroyed by more than 50 countries and, thanks to concerted international efforts to clear mined land, mine-affected communities in every region of the world are becoming free of landmines. These are very welcome developments and we hope that the coming report will tell of more such progress.

Unfortunately, we cannot ignore the continued use of anti-personnel landmines in some regions of the world. Canada deplores their continued use. We will keep working with other States in the Convention's tradition of cooperation to get the Convention accepted and implemented by everyone, everywhere.

I would not want to close without applauding the great work that Ambassador Lint of Belgium and Mr. Brighton Mugarisanwa of Zimbabwe have done this last year, serving as Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee of Experts on the Status and Operation of the Convention. I believe as well that Ambassador Kongstad of Norway, who served the past year as President of the Convention, deserves comparable praise and gratitude, and I would ask his compatriots here to convey these to him in Oslo.

Mr. President, at a time when the security contribution of multilateral arms control and disarmament forums, institutions, agreements and programmes is being doubted, questioned and challenged in key circles, it is deeply encouraging to bear witness to our continued, incontestible, multilateral progress against anti-personnel landmines.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Canada for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria, Ms. Baghli.

Ms. BAGHLI (Algeria) (translated from French): Mr. President, first of all, on behalf of my delegation, allow me to congratulate you on your accession to the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to commend you on the way in which you have been conducting our proceedings.

Mr. President, like previous speakers, I would like to stress the importance of the Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel Landmines, prohibiting the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, which sadly continue to claim many victims around the world. Our country was fully aware of the importance and the scope of this most welcome instrument, which undertakes to ban the use of those destructive weapons and establish an appropriate framework for international cooperation in combating this scourge, and it warmly welcomed the preparatory process for the Convention and was one of the first to sign it. Motivated by the concern which we have always had for the danger represented by anti-personnel landmines, Algeria has just ratified the Convention and we are now preparing to deposit the instruments of ratification with the appropriate authorities.

(Ms. Baghli, Algeria)

Although we have not often appeared on the lists of countries affected by mines, Algeria has suffered badly from these weapons, dating, for the most part, from the colonial period. The mines in question were laid by colonial forces in violation of the most elementary rules of human rights, with a view to hindering the Algerian people's struggle for independence. Those mines still claim victims today. These victims have a right to compensation and reparations from those responsible for laying the mines. Since the advent of independence, the services of the People's National Army have conducted mine-clearance operations but these efforts remain insufficient because of the lack of appropriate training and necessary resources. While initial estimates put the number of those mines at between 2 and 3 million, some estimates put forward much higher figures.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to pay well-deserved tribute to the non-governmental organizations which contributed so extensively to the successful conclusion of the Ottawa process. Their determination and their perseverance in this regard were exemplary. That determination was not confined to that task, however, and these organizations are now demonstrating the same determination and the same commitment in contributing to the implementation of the Ottawa Convention and in providing valuable assistance to the populations affected by mines.

In this regard the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) in 1997 was well deserved. The commitment and accomplishments demonstrated by non-governmental organizations in the area of disarmament have persuaded Algeria to request the participation of these organizations in the proceedings of the Conference of Disarmament as observers.

Since the signing of the Ottawa Convention much has been done to help the countries affected by those destructive weapons in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. Recognition must be given here to the donor countries which provided the necessary funds to help those countries affected by mines. We must salute this example of international cooperation and solidarity, given that the presence of anti-personnel landmines considerably hinders the economic development of the regions affected, not to mention, of course, the many victims which they claim, long after the end of a conflict or source of tension.

I must also pay tribute to the role played by organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the relevant agencies of the United Nations and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, for their commitment to implementing the Ottawa Convention and in particular the outstanding work that they have been doing in raising awareness of the dangers posed by landmines.

On the eve of the Third Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, scheduled for 18-21 September 2001 in Managua, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to wish the participants in that meeting every success in their work and to appeal for the universalization

(Ms. Baghli, Algeria)

of the Convention, so that our planet may be delivered from the scourge of anti-personnel landmines. As for my country, under the terms of its ratification of the Ottawa Convention, we undertake to comply fully with its provisions and to cooperate with a view to its full implementation.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Algeria for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Mexico, Mr. Romero.

Mr. ROMERO (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, may I begin by congratulating you on the enlightened and skilful way in which you have been conducting the work of our Conference. The statements we have just heard, particularly those by our sister delegations of Chile and Peru, strengthen our conviction that the Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel Landmines has been able, in a very short time, to establish an incontestable international standard under which anti-personnel landmines are quite unacceptable. The accession of 120 countries to the Ottawa Convention, together with Chile's deposit of its instrument of ratification yesterday, is irrefutable evidence that the total eradication of anti-personnel landmines is a realistic goal for the international community.

Thanks to the political will that has been shown since the Convention entered into force, not only has Peru taken up the Managua Challenge and eliminated its stockpile of anti-personnel landmines but other countries in the Latin American region that have been severely affected by these arms have also been able to make progress in mine clearance and the destruction of stockpiles, so as to meet the deadlines laid down in the Convention. The impact which this has had for the effective implementation of the Ottawa Convention has been reflected in the drastic reduction in the number of countries producing mines, in the declining number of exports of such weapons, in the wide-ranging destruction of stockpiles, as illustrated by Peru, by my own country, by Ecuador and by Nicaragua, in the considerable decline in the number of victims and in the increase in the funds provided for mine-clearance programmes and activities. The results of these processes may be seen in the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims into society and the relief afforded to the affected populations, which are now starting to restore their community life. It is now up to the States parties to the Convention and to organized civil society to maintain these efforts and to ensure that the total prohibition on anti-personnel mines is applied in practice and supported by the necessary international cooperation for the effective implementation of the Convention. Mexico considers that universality is one of the essential targets of the Ottawa Convention, and consequently urges the 52 States that have still not done so to accede as quickly as possible to the Convention.

Mr. President, next week in Managua the States parties to the Convention will have a fresh opportunity to discuss its modus operandi and to continue their endeavours to make it a universal convention. Since this is the first time that a meeting of the States parties is being held on the American continent we are certain that it will give us fresh impetus to work towards our goal of a western hemisphere free of anti-personnel mines.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of Mexico for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

Before calling on the next speaker, indeed the last speaker on my list for today, Ambassador Ian Soutar of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, I wish to inform you that Ambassador Soutar will soon be leaving the Disarmament Conference, since the authorities in his country have assigned him to other important duties.

Ambassador Soutar joined us on 18 August 1997 in circumstances where the Conference, after struggling with its agenda for an entire session, was about to start drafting its annual report, marking one of the most difficult episodes in its history. It was undoubtedly this exposure to the complexities of our work, which, combined with his thorough knowledge of the issues and limitation of arms and disarmament, that enabled him to lead the Conference successfully in drafting its report the following year, when he himself was President of the Conference, an office which he discharged with consummate diplomatic skill. Ambassador Soutar has represented his country with courage and authority, with distinction and elegance. He has also taken an active part in various disarmament endeavours outside the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. The gracious and even-handed style with which he performed his duties in the Ad Hoc Group of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, as Friend of the Chair for Compliance Measures, has earned him well-deserved respect.

I am certain that I speak for us all when I say that we are going to miss him and I wish him and his family every happiness and personal success in their future undertakings.

I now call on the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ambassador Ian Soutar.

Mr. SOUTAR (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, may I first of all thank you for your good wishes and may I reciprocate by assuring you of my delegation's continuing support for the remainder of your presidency.

Now, Mr. President, I realize that all my colleagues are anxious to proceed to the further elaboration of our annual report to the United Nations General Assembly, but I nonetheless seek their indulgence to make a few personal remarks as I approach the conclusion of my tour in Geneva. I shall certainly stay within the guidelines suggested by our former colleague, Frank Majoor - no more than a page for each of the four years I have been here.

Four years is the normal tour for a British ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament - although I note in passing, and somewhat enviously, that my two immediate predecessors were each fortunate enough to remain in Geneva for rather longer - and I must say that those four years have slipped away very rapidly indeed. I am grateful to my Government for having given me the chance to serve them here in Geneva, and to appreciate the pleasures of this beautiful region, not to mention the attractions of "La France voisine". But most of all I am grateful for the opportunity of working alongside my colleagues here at the Conference on Disarmament. It is fashionable to deprecate the notion that the Conference on Disarmament is a

(Mr. Soutar, United Kingdom)

club, but I shall distance myself from Groucho Marx, who once famously said that he did not want to belong to any club that would accept him as a member: on the contrary I have enjoyed my membership of this particular club. If one leaves aside the connotations of elitism, or exclusivity attached to the social side of a club, the underlying definition of a club is an association dedicated to the pursuit of a particular interest or activity - which is precisely what we are engaged in: the pursuit of multilateral disarmament measures.

I would be misleading the Conference if I tried to conceal my disappointment that the four years of my posting to Geneva have coincided with a very fallow period as far as the work of the Conference is concerned. I am particularly disappointed that the personal effort I invested in educating myself in the technology of fissile material production has borne no practical rewards during my time at the Conference. Ah well, such is life. Perhaps when I retire I can supplement my pension by selling my acquired knowledge to the highest bidder!

More seriously, Mr. President, even if, as I say, I regret the failure of the Conference to undertake substantive work during my time here, I do derive some modest satisfaction from having played a small part, alongside others, in keeping the engine of our vehicle well oiled and ticking over against the day when, as we all hope, it will be possible once more to step on the accelerator. I was particularly honoured to have been able to serve the Conference as President, as you are now doing, Sir, and like you, to preside over the adoption of the annual report.

At that time, and indeed throughout my time in Geneva, I have learned many things about many people, and not a little about myself.

The first of these is transparency. We have talked a lot about transparency in armaments - but a lot of what we do here is about transparency in relationships. An English Ambassador - and I mean an English Ambassador - once said "An ambassador is an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country." Even if that were true in the seventeenth century, it is not true in the twenty-first, and certainly not true in the multilateral context. Transparency, and with it, credibility and predictability, is what our business here should be all about.

And the corollary of transparency is patience. I am of course not the first diplomat nor the last to have discovered that - Lord Strang, a former permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office, said in the 1950s: "Diplomacy is not one of the easiest professions. What it calls for above all things is patience." That certainly has been my experience in Geneva. Patience, a readiness to listen to the other person's point of view - even, or especially if you think that you have heard it all before - and a willingness to keep talking, long after bedtime if need be: these seem to me to be the essential ingredients of such success as we have been able to register.

And, finally, Geneva has amply confirmed to me the wisdom of a distinguished French Ambassador, de Callières, who wrote one of the first treatises on diplomacy in the eighteenth century. He wrote: "An ambassador must be liberal and magnificent, but with judgement and design, and his magnificence should be reflected in his suite. His table should be served neatly,

(Mr. Soutar, United Kingdom)

plentifully and with taste. He should give frequent entertainments and parties. A good table is the best and easiest way of keeping himself well informed. The natural effect of good eating and drinking is the inauguration of friendship and the creation of familiarity, and when people are a trifle warmed by wine they often disclose secrets of importance."

I am sure that colleagues would agree that our French colleague has faithfully followed the precepts of his distinguished predecessor. Nor indeed is he alone in that.

Mr. President, it will be evident, I think, that I leave Geneva with mixed feelings. Both personally and professionally there is still so much that I feel I could have done, but my Government has decided that I must move on. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking colleagues, past and present, for the friendship and advice, and above all good company, which they have bestowed on me over the past four years. I should like to wish them all the best for their future endeavours, both here and in their native lands. I cannot fail to thank Director-General Petrovsky, Deputy Secretary-General Román-Morey and the secretariat staff for their professional assistance. And last but not least the invisible but indispensable interpreters for their unfailing support.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank Ambassador Soutar for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair and once again we would like to wish you every success in your new posting.

This concludes the list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I see none, therefore this concludes our business for today.

As I mentioned earlier, we shall convene in 10 minutes' time in an informal plenary, to continue consideration of the draft annual report. As usual this meeting will be open only to member States of the Conference and to observer States. The next and probably last plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 13 September 2001, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.